


spotlight

May/June 2017 \$2.50

american association of community theatre



**AACT TEAM
Conference 2017**

**AACTFest
2017**

**AACT's
New Executive
Director**

**Trending
Producing
New Works**

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Murray Chase
AACT President
2015-2017

If you're a lover of community theatre, you have to attend the AACTFest national festival this year. You just have to.

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Here's how:

- The management conference alone, open to all community theatre leadership—paid or volunteer—will **pay for your trip** through revenue strategies and money-saving tips.
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- You'll attend dozens of workshops—management and performance—which will help you **raise money** or do stronger, **more successful productions**.
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AACTFest in Rochester, Minnesota, is a walking festival. All the hotels are within just a few minutes' walk to the theatre and the convention center. In between there are plenty of shops, restaurants, and adult beverage establishments to fill any spare time.

And since Rochester is the home of the Mayo Clinic, you'll have your best opportunity to re-create the iconic scene from *Airplane*: "Give me Ham on five, hold the Mayo."

You see, you have to be there. So...we'll see you there.

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!

Order your free perusal script or read online at

www.comedyplays.net

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John Pomeroy from Drake University leads the Technical Skills track in lighting equipment techniques at the AACT TEAM Conference 2016 in Des Moines, Iowa. The AACT TEAM conference 2017 will be held in Arlington, Texas - **see back cover of this issue.**

Visit aact.org/team for registration, schedule, hotel discounts, and more information.

Photo by Cran Dodds

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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AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 2 (2016)

Includes all seven of the national new play festival winners.

Code: AL7. Price: \$29.95

Wash, Dry, Fold ACTING EDITION COMING SOON

By Nedra Pezold Roberts. Two sisters, Trudy and Enola, struggle to keep their run-down laundromat and take care of their Uncle Slackjaw, a Vietnam POW and wounded soul. The arrival of the mysterious Arlene and the death of their uncle provide the potential to unlock their cages of torment. Code: WJ2.

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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- VIII Dennis Gilmore
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- IX Jon Douglas Rake
Tacoma, WA
- X Dane Winters
Germany (US Army)

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

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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Ron Ziegler, Festivals Coordinator
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Spotlight

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

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Stephen Peithman, Katrina Ploof, Ken Roberts,
Angela Sanscrainte, Bryce Seckinger, Chris Serface,
Keith Strang, Ron Ziegler

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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

AACTFest 2017

Rochester, Minnesota

June 26 - July 1, 2017



The AACTFest 2017 National Festival includes

- 12 Award Winning Productions – aact.org/aactfest-2017-productions
- AACT YouthFest - 4 Youth theatre company productions – aact.org/aactfest-2017-youth-festival
- Design Competition & Exhibition – aact.org/design17
- Theatre Management Conference – prior to AACTFest 2017 – aact.org/management-conference
- Youth Leadership Conference – aact.org/aactfest-2017-youth-leadership-conference
- Educational Workshops – aact.org/aactfest-2017-workshops
- Top Vendor Exhibits – aact.org/festival-exhibitor-list
- NEW Monologue Competition – aact.org/solo
- AACTChat – aact.org/chat
- social events, sightseeing, and networking opportunities
- ending with a Festival Awards Presentation

Rochester Civic Theatre entrance



There's Still time to Register!

Registration and information are available at aact.org/17

Hotel and Transportation information and discounts –
aact.org/hotels

AACTFest 2017 National Festival Schedule is available at
aact.org/17

The Moving On section (page 17) lists theatres recently selected to represent their States/Regions in the AACTFest 2017 cycle. See all theatres representing states and regions in the AACTFest 2017 cycle at aact.org/moving-2017.

The AACTFest 2017 National Design Competition & Exhibition recognizes how important designers are to the success of theatre productions. AACT member theatres and their designers may enter; designs must be of projects occurring between July 2015 and June 2017. Designers do not have to attend to enter. Awards will be presented for Outstanding Overall Design and Outstanding in individual categories (as warranted). Outstanding Overall Design will receive a \$300 cash prize. Individual Category Design Winners will receive a \$100 cash prize. aact.org/design17

The AACT Youth Leadership Conference is open to ages 14-18 and will focus on cultivating youth who aspire to be leaders in their communities. This exciting conference will instill confidence, knowledge, and team building skills. Registration is open NOW! aact.org/aactfest-2017-youth-leadership-conference

Contribute to the Silent Auction and Help Build the AACT Endowment – aact.org/auction

Explore Rochester, Minnesota at VisitRochesterMN.com

AACT Workshops include Adjudication Training and Introduction to Adjudication – aact.org/aactfest-2017-adjudication-training

NEW for AACTFest 2017 are three Headliners:

Karolina Kuras



Barry Hughson,
Executive Director
National Ballet of Canada

With a wide range of leadership in the arts, Barry Hughson has served as arts advocate, consultant, and educator, including teaching and speaking engagements in the US, Europe, and South America. He is a founding member of Dance/USA's National Leadership Council, and has served as a mentor to

emerging arts executives through the Institute for Leadership Training. He is the Vice Chair of Dance/USA, North America's largest service organization for professional dance, and serves on the Steering Committee for the Canadian Arts Summit. Under his leadership as Executive Director, the Warner Theatre in Torrington, Connecticut, successfully mounted the largest capital campaign in the community's history, restoring the art deco theatre to its former grandeur in 2002. Hughson served as the Festival Chair for the 2003 AACTFest national festival at the Warner Theatre in Torrington.



Michael John LaChiusa
Composer, Lyricist, and Librettist

Michael John LaChiusa is a five-time Tony Award nominee for his Broadway productions of *The Wild Party*, *Marie Christine*, and *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. His acclaimed off-Broadway musicals, that premiered at The Public Theater and Lincoln Center, include *Giant*, *Queen of the Mist*, *See What I Wanna See*, *First Lady Suite*, *Bernarda Alba*, *Hello Again*, *Little*

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Fish, and *Four Short Operas: Break, Agnes, Eulogy For Mr. Hamm, Lucky Nurse*, and *First Daughter Suite*. LaChiusa also received commissions from Chicago Lyric Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among others. Writes Stephen Holden of the New York Times, Broadway musicals "need composers as talented as Mr. LaChiusa, who have the courage to sacrifice commerciality and go their own way." Winner of two Emmys for the children's animated series *The Wonder Pets*, he teaches at both NYU and Columbia University.



David Stewart
Director of Production, Guthrie Theater

David Stewart has served as an Actors Equity Association stage manager for Madison Repertory Theatre, Studio Arena Theatre, St. Louis MUNY, Kansas City Starlight Outdoor Musicals, The Little Theatre on the Square, and Vienna Austria's English Theatre. He

is the chair for the People of Color Network at USITT and sits on its board of directors. He is co-founder of the highly successful Gateway mentorship program, pairing diverse young talent with professionals who can help them navigate the industry as they build their careers. He has two nationally published articles on diversity in theatre production and is the technical editor for two theatre management books. He was recently awarded the Distinguished Alumni Achievement award from his alma mater, Webster University. For the University of Wisconsin, Madison, he served as Production Manager and Head of Stage Management, as well as Director of Production for the Office of Multi-Cultural Arts Institute.

Don't miss these Headliner Workshops and all the excitement of the AACTFest 2017 national festival!



Spotlight on Discounters



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AACTFest Questions?

General AACTFest 2017 Questions aact.org/17
AACT office info@aact.org 817-732-3177

AACTFest 2017 National Festival Registration aact.org/17
Karen Matheny karen@aact.org 817-732-3177

Performance Venue
AACTFest Technical Liason: Bob Frame framer@cayuga-cc.edu
315-294-8640
Rochester Civic Theatre rochestercivictheatre.org

Festival Hotels aact.org/hotels
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel 507-281-8000
Hilton Garden Inn 507-285-1234
Kahler Grand Hotel 800-533-1655

Airline Discounts, Airports, and Ground Transportation
aact.org/travel

Exhibition Space for Vendors aact.org/festival-exhibitor-list
Darlene DeLorenzo darlene@aact.org 512-267-4509

Workshops aact.org/workshops
Chris Serface chris@tacomalittletheatre.com 253-272-2281

AACT Chat
Nancy Eppert nkeppert@gmail.com 816-506-7900 (cell)

Monologue Competition aact.org/solo
Kris Geddie kgeddie@venicetheatre.net 941-584-0639

AACT Silent Auction aact.org/auction
Sue Ellen Gerrells ad@southcitytheatre.com 205-621-2128
Tom Cowley thomasgcowley@gmail.com 580-765-5085

YouthFest 2017 aact.org/aactfest-2017-youth-festival
Chad-Alan Carr 717-334-2962 (theatre) 717-688-5098 (cell)
chad@gettysburgcommunitytheatre.org

Youth Leadership Conference aact.org/aactfest-2017-youth-leadership-conference
AACT office info@aact.org 817-732-3177
Instructor: Jennifer Hamilton jvbhamilton@gmail.com
785-249-5341 (cell)

Community Theatre Management Conference aact.org/ctmc
AACT office info@aact.org 817-732-3177
Facilitator: Ron Ziegler ron@aact.org 941-615-7616

Adjudication Training aact.org/at
AACT office info@aact.org 817-732-3177
Instructor: Kathy Pingel kpingel88@yahoo.com 941-615-7912

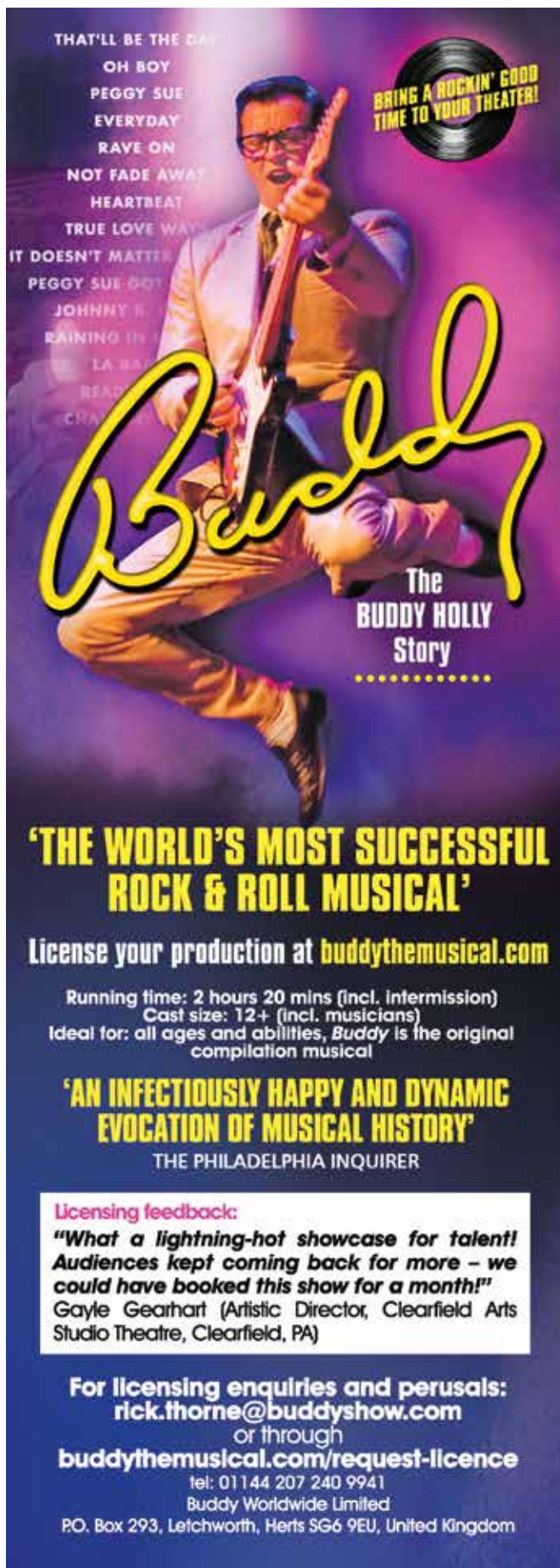
Design Exhibit and Competition aact.org/design17
Bob Frame framer@cayuga-cc.edu 315-294-8640
Rich Gannon rgannon49@gmail.com 630-305-7348

AACTFest 2017 Rules aact.org/handbook
Kay Armstrong oktotx@sbcglobal.net 214-682-9920
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AACTFest 2017 Production Team (Internships)
Jill Patchin jill@aact.org 616-401-8864

Volunteer at AACTFest 2017
Mary Jo DeNolf maryjo@aact.org 616-222-6371

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AACTFest 2017 National Companies

AACTFest 2017 National Community Theatre Festival will present twelve winning productions at Rochester Civic Theatre this June. Profiles of five of the AACTFest 2017 National Companies are featured here, and the remaining seven will be featured in the next issue of *Spotlight*.



Region I
Windham Actors Guild
Windham, New Hampshire
windhamactorsguild.com

Windham Actors Guild, located in Southern New Hampshire, has been producing theatre since 2010. The organization strives to make quality theatre accessible to both actors and audiences alike. Each season includes a large main stage musical, a more intimate straight show, and a musical youth production. Windham Actors Guild values a process that fosters personal and organizational growth in the theatrical arts, while executing an end product of which all those involved can be proud.

The Most Massive Woman Wins by Madeleine George

Challenging, brutal, and hilarious, four women of various shapes and sizes sitting in the waiting room of a liposuction clinic explore their perceptions of body image. The women reveal their experiences dealing with their weight issues through monologues, short scenes, and even schoolyard rhymes.



Angela Sanscrainte



Region IV
Theatre Winter Haven
Winter Haven, Florida
theatrewinterhaven.com

Since its founding in 1970, Theatre Winter Haven has worked to fulfill its mission,

"We inspire, challenge, entertain and educate our community by creating exceptional theatrical experiences." Theatre Winter Haven offers five Mainstage productions, a complete Theatre Academy program, in-school and after-school classes, a touring program for young adults, a touring program for senior citizens, a summer musical, and staged readings of contemporary plays. A professional staff of eight oversees the programming and professional theatre artists are brought in from around the state and country to design, direct, and perform.

The Amish Project by Jessica Dickey

The Amish Project is a fictional exploration of the Nickel Mines schoolhouse shooting in an Amish community and the path of forgiveness and compassion forged in its wake.



Bryce Seckinger



Region IV
Starkville Community Theatre
 Starkville, Mississippi
sct-online.org

Starkville Community Theatre (SCT) is one of Mississippi's most award-winning community theatres. Founded in 1978 when 50 people attended an interest meeting announced in the local newspaper, SCT's success is based on strong community involvement and support. The theatre has produced over 100 successful productions including dramas, comedies, one-acts, musicals, and musical revues. SCT has advanced to the regional level of competition at Southeastern Theatre Conference numerous times and is now the first theatre in the state to advance to the AACTFest national festival for a second time. Next year SCT will celebrate its 40th season.

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike
 by Christopher Durang

Siblings Vanya and Sonia share a home where they bicker and complain. When their movie-star sister swoops in with her boy toy, resentments flare up and threats ensue. Toss in a sassy maid who predicts the future and an aspiring actress whose prettiness worries the imperious Masha and anything can happen.



Jennifer R. Eaton

National Companies continued on next page ►

The off-Broadway POLITICAL MASTERPIECE that gets everyone talking!

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—New York Theatre Wire

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Region VII
Theatre Esprit Asia
 Aurora, Colorado
 teatheatre.org

Theatre Esprit Asia (TEA) is the first and only Asian-American theatre in the entire Rocky Mountain region. In its four year history, its 13 productions have won critical acclaim and 20 awards, including sweeping the 2014 and 2016 Colorado AACT Festivals with

People's Choice, Best Actress, and Best Lighting; also in 2014 for Best Original Play, Choreography, and Directing Excellence; and in 2016 for Best Production and Set Design Excellence. TEA's mission is to present original works on the contemporary Asian diaspora; provide creative opportunities for Asian-Western actors, playwrights, and directors; and function as an agent for social justice and change.

Coming to America by Maria Cheng & Peter Trinh

Coming to America tells two immigration stories, filled with tragedy and humor. "Boat Person" is a harrowing tale of a Vietnamese braving the high seas and combating starvation and marauding pirates. "Antecedents" is a Chinese family's journey from surviving the Japanese occupation of China to the election of America's first Black President.



Brian Miller



Region IX
Tacoma Musical Playhouse
 Tacoma, Washington
 tmp.org

Tacoma Musical Playhouse (TMP) was founded in January 1994 to fulfill a need in Tacoma for a theatre company that specializes in the uniquely American art form of musical theatre. Mr.

Rake's artistic leadership of the company, supported by a need in the community and an availability of excellent local talent, are the driving forces of its success. The primary artistic team of Jon Douglas Rake, Managing Artistic Director, and Jeffrey Stvrtecky, Music Director, provides stability to the productions at TMP. This stability has assured a level of quality from production to production. TMP is now the largest community theatre in the Northwest region.

The Addams Family, Act 1 by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice

Wednesday Addams has grown up and fallen in love with a respectable young man. Wednesday confides in her father and begs him not to tell her mother. Gomez must do something he has never done— keep a secret from his wife, Morticia. Chaos ensues for the whole family on the fateful night they host a dinner for the "normal" boyfriend and his parents.



Kat Dollanide

Reflections After AACTFest Regional Festival

What Is To Be Gained From An Adjudication?

Here are some answers from around Region IV, which had 15 shows in the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) regional festival March 1-4, in Lexington, Kentucky.

"I've had a couple of days to distance myself from the Regional Community Theatre Festival and SETC convention. I've read the Facebook posts from those who were disappointed and others who were delighted with the results. I've read some moving posts from others who look at the festival experience as a chance to grow and learn despite disappointments in awards. I've been working with festivals now for decades. I've been on both sides as one being adjudicated and as one doing the adjudicating. And what I've finally decided is while it stings (sometimes dreadfully) to have adjudicators not agree with my interpretation or other performance choices, I have to be objective about their comments. If I think they are right on target with their adjudications for the other productions yet don't seem to get what I'm trying to do, then I've probably missed the mark somewhere.

"I've learned so much from festival adjudications. For example, from my *Sylvia* adjudications, I learned how important it is to trust the playwright and not go for the laugh. From my *Night Mother* adjudications, I learned that sometimes creating "business" -- even well-motivated -- can get in the way of actors relating to one another.

"Each time I listen to adjudications and see others' productions, I take away something that enhances my own work. And that is why I keep putting myself out there, allowing others to publicly comment on what I've done. At the tender age of 71 I still want to learn and grow and be the best I can be. Festivals allow me to become a better artist. Will I ever be as good as some of the directors/actors I've witnessed? I don't know. But that's not what's important. What's important is that I become the best "me" I can be. AACT Festivals allow me to make that journey."

Sue Ellen Gerrells, Region IV Festival Chair

"Theatre has been my life for close to forty years yet I still have so much to learn as I continue to evolve so I welcome constructive feedback, but that's usually done in the privacy of my home theatre, so in order for me to get through that excruciating moment when feeling naked and vulnerable in front of my peers from a dozen other theatres, I remind myself that the theatre experience is subjective, thereto is adjudication. I do my best to receive an adjudicator's feedback with an open mind...then I chew on their comments (sometimes that can take a while)...and digest...and then I incorporate or tuck away what makes sense and discard the rest. On the flip-side, as an adjudicator, I understand the enormous challenge of offering honest, constructive feedback on a wide range of shows featuring a wide range of talent in an encouraging manner to all participants. It's exhausting.

continued on next page ►

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"I've learned much from my observations and experiences on the state, regional, and national level.

"Bottom line - Theatre isn't for wimps"

Kimberly Frick-Welker, Cookeville Performing Arts Center

"SETC is a spring ritual for me and many of my friends. It's about connecting us to opportunities in theatre as well as a creative recharging time. Many memories of state festivals and convention now fill space in my heart and brain. I have been a part of our community festival as board member, an actor, a director, volunteer, and audience member. My amazing company of talented artists has traveled shows that received awards as well as shows that weren't recognized with any accolades. I never fail to be blown away with the dedication it takes for community companies all with diverse backgrounds and resources to get there. The expense, preparation and time commitment to travel a show to be adjudicated from a panel of artists who are called upon to do the best they can to respond to each show with honest and encouraging remarks is an experience not for wimps. The willingness to put your heart and creative chops on a stage to be judged takes great courage. In fact I have some professional theatre artist friends who argue that because art is so intimately personal that they find the whole process of festivals to be, for lack of a better word, distasteful. Things can be said through the remarks of even a well-meaning adjudicator that can have an everlasting and negative impact on an artist. I have to remind myself while I am there to not take myself too seriously.

(For those who know me you know that's a stretch for me!) Yet we continue to risk our hearts to put our work out there because it's one of the few professional development opportunities available for the community theatre world. After SETC17 (perhaps the strongest Region IV community festival I have ever experienced and I haven't missed one in 10 years) I am choosing to reflect on finding the joy and knowledge that is gained through the experience. This year we celebrate telling our story. This year we grew a bit as a company. This year we are thankful for the challenges the piece offered and beyond thankful for a home theatre that supports and values how the investment of doing festival makes our company stronger."

Kristy Meanor, Wetumpka Depot Players

And finally, a reminder:

"Competitive art - that's something I'm not entirely sure I understand. But I do know that every person in the room at festival has chosen to be there. That at some point in the run up to festival everyone has said 'yes' to being adjudicated. And taking responsibility for making that choice is part of the acceptance of any outcome. So entering to learn is a great way to view the experience. And remembering that it's a choice - that it's not something every company may love to do. There is a deep respect in a commitment to this festival process. And respecting the end result is part of that. It's hard to not take it personally. I've been on both sides of the table and, gosh, it hurts. But ultimately by saying 'yes' we have agreed to not take it personally. It's up to us as participants to manage how we feel about the outcome."

Katrina Ploof, Theatre Winter Haven ♦



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Moving On

Theatres recently selected to represent their States/Regions in the AACTFest 2017 cycle.

State winners moving on to their regional festival are shown below. Some states qualify to send two shows to the regional festival. Winners of the regional festivals will move on to the national festival, in Rochester, Minnesota, June 26-July 1, 2017.

Productions advancing to the AACTFest 2017 national festival are in bold type.

See all theatres representing states and regions in the AACTFest 2017 cycle at aact.org/moving-2017

Region	Theatre	From		Production
I	Windham Actors Guild	Windham	NH	<i>The Most Massive Woman Wins</i> by Madeleine George
II	Little Theatre of Wilkes-Barre	Wilkes Barre	PA	<i>Angels In America</i> by Tony Kushner
II	Erie Playhouse	Erie	PA	<i>The Glorious Ones</i> by Lynn Ahrens
III	Center Stage Theatre	Midland	MI	<i>Venus in Fur</i> by David Ives
III	Standing Room Only Theatre Group	Bay City	MI	<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare
III	Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre, Inc.	Wisconsin Rapids	WI	<i>The Gin Game</i> by D.L. Coburn
III	Central Wisconsin Area Community Theater	Stevens Point	WI	<i>The Diary of Adam and Eve</i> by Mark Bucci & Mark Twain
III	Pulse Opera House	Warren	IN	<i>Nunsense</i> by Dan Goggin
III	Kokomo Civic Theatre	Kokomo	IN	<i>Passing Notes</i> by Joe Cameron
IV	Theatre Winter Haven	Winter Haven	FL	<i>The Amish Project</i> by Jessica Dickey
IV	Starkville Community Theatre	Starkville	MS	<i>Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike</i> by Christopher Durang
IV	Hickory Community Theatre	Hickory	NC	<i>Junk</i> by Molly Bass and Jeff Hartman
V	Dassel-Cokato Community Theatre/ Fungus Amongus Players	Cokato	MN	<i>The Voice of the Prairie</i> by John Olive
V	The Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company	Chatfield	MN	<i>On the Road to Verona</i> by The Minnesota Sky Vault Theatre Company
V	Newton Community Theatre, Inc.	Newton	IA	<i>Pvt. Wars</i> by James McLure
V	Wilson Performing Arts Center	Red Oak	IA	<i>A Number</i> by Caryl Churchill
VI	Community Players of Hobbs, Inc.	Hobbs	NM	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> by Tennessee Williams
VI	Denton Community Theatre, Inc.	Denton	TX	<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i> by Alfred Uhry
VI	Katy Visual and Performing Arts Center	Katy	TX	<i>Answers</i> by Tom Topor
VII	Theatre Esprit Asia	Aurora	CO	<i>Coming To America</i> by Maria Cheng, Peter Trinh
IX	Boise Little Theater	Boise	ID	<i>The Other Room</i> by Ariadne Blayde
IX	DreamWeaver Musical Theatre	Nampa	ID	<i>Wizard of Oz</i> by L. Frank Baum
IX	Tacoma Musical Playhouse	Tacoma	WA	<i>The Addams Family</i> by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice
IX	Tacoma Little Theatre	Tacoma	WA	<i>Second Samuel</i> by Pamela Parker
IX	Pentacle Theatre	Salem	OR	<i>The Zoo Story</i> by Edward Albee

National Community Theatre Managing Directors Conference

Personalized to meet your needs

Madison, Wisconsin, November 3 - 6, 2017

Community theatre managing directors will gather in Madison, Friday, November 3 – Monday, November 6, 2017, to work together, share stories of challenges and solutions, learn about other theatre operations, and meet colleagues from across the country. The conference will be held at the Madison Concourse Hotel, 1 W. Dayton Street, Madison, Wisconsin. AACT cosponsors this conference which is conducted by the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Cost: \$350, or \$325 each for groups of 3+ until Nov 1. Then fee increases to \$375 per person or \$350 per person for groups of 3 or more.

This four-day, biennial conference is held exclusively for individuals employed full-time in an administrative or artistic position in a community theatre organization.

John Viars returns to facilitate and will guide the group through managed but vibrant discussions of various topics including marketing strategies, fundraising challenges, staffing issues, outreach activities, and systems for selecting a season. All who wish to contribute may do so by asking questions, identifying specific problems, or providing other useful input.

John Viars has been Executive Director of the Des Moines Playhouse since 1982, where he has directed and produced over 200 plays and hosted AACT's first-ever International Community Theatre Festival. He is a charter member of AACT and has served as its president. He is a frequent workshop leader, consultant, and a national adjudicator of theatre festivals. He is recipient of the David C. Bryant and Art Cole Awards from AACT. ♦

For more information visit aact.org/madison

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All around Gettysburg, visitors can catch glimpses of Gettysburg's past. There are museums, including the Shriver House Museum and the Jennie Wade House, that show guests what life was like for civilians during the Battle of Gettysburg. There are tours that take visitors through the streets of Gettysburg, to the National Cemetery, The Gettysburg Visitor's Center, and the Battlefield, which is one of the most visited military parks in the country.



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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 at the beautiful Marriott Niagara Falls Hotel Fallsview & Spa. Tuesday evening will be free to enjoy awesome Niagara Falls, experience amazing restaurants, sightsee, or visit the fabulous casino next to the hotel.

The adventure continues Wednesday through Friday at the Queens Landing Niagara-on-the-Lake Hotel & 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!

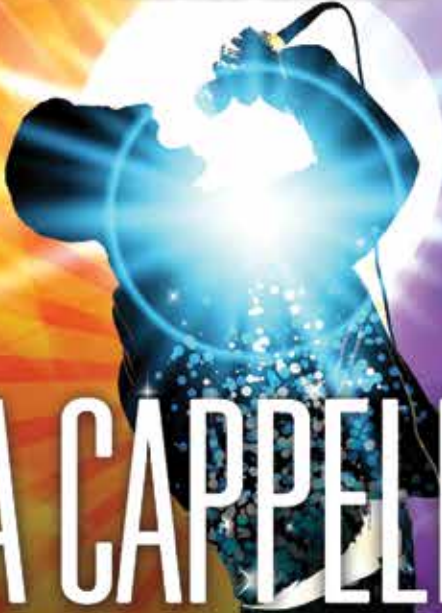
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Visit aact.org/shaw-fest-adventure for registration, hotel and transportation information, productions and activities included on this adventure, and links to the Shaw Festival. ♦



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AACT Announces New Executive Director

The American Association of Community Theatre Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Quiana Clark-Roland as its next Executive Director. Quiana will take the lead of the national association from outgoing Executive Director Julie Crawford, who has led the organization for 23 years, when Julie retires later this year.

Quiana has a MS in Arts Administration from Drexel University and a BA in Arts Administration with a minor in Theatre from the University of Kentucky. Quiana comes to AACT from the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) where she served as the Executive Assistant and Program Manager. Previously she was Administrative Assistant for the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, an arts and culture service organization in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



AACT was founded in 1986 and Julie Crawford became AACT's first Executive Director in 1994. During her tenure with AACT, there have been great changes. AACT President Murray Chase notes, "Julie has been an integral agent of change and continuing growth for this national organization."

It's a time of change for AACT, but that is nothing new. Julie's work with the AACT Board and its dedicated volunteers and staff leaves a legacy and a strong, forward looking association, ready to welcome our new staff leader!

Welcome Quiana ! Join us as we welcome Quiana at the AACTFest 2017 National Festival June 26 - July 1 in Rochester, Minnesota (aact.org/17). ♦

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AACT Announces National Awards 2017

AACT is proud to recognize the 2017 recipients of AACT National Awards, which will be presented in June, during the AACTFest 2017 national festival in Rochester, Minnesota.

2017 AACT Fellows

The honorable designation FELLOW is bestowed for life upon those members of AACT who over a period of years have contributed significantly to the idea and ideal of community theatre.



Ron Cameron-Lewis (Mississauga, Ontario, Canada) is Professor Emeritus at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario, Canada, where he helped establish the Music Theatre program in 1972. Sheridan graduates currently work throughout Canada, on Broadway, in the West End in London, and on international cruise ships. He has worked as a theatre educator and adjudicator for AACT at state, regional, national, and international levels and taught adjudication at AACTFests in Rochester, New York, and Carmel, Indiana, plus many workshops at festivals around the USA. In 2016, Ron was re-elected to a second three-year term as a Member-at-Large on the AACT Board, serving on the Education, Adjudication, and International Committees. He recently developed a training video for new adjudicators at State level and in 2013, directed a production representing Canada at WorldFest in Venice, Florida. Ron's AACT travels over 32 years have taken him to Indiana nine times and another dozen states. He truly treasures his AACT friendships.



Lori Chase (Venice, Florida) has worked in every aspect of theatre during the past 30 years: production, scenic and costume design, stage management, administration, and as an acclaimed actress. Her work spans both community and professional theatre. Currently she works as Event Coordinator for Florida's Venice Theatre, a position she has held since 2009. Lori planned and executed almost all aspects of the successful 2010 and 2014 AACTWorldFest international community theatre festivals—and is handling the same task for the upcoming 2018 festival. Lori has served as festival chair for the Southeastern Theatre Conference. Eclectic past careers have included business management for a surgery center, as well as touring with an AmeriCorps acting troupe.



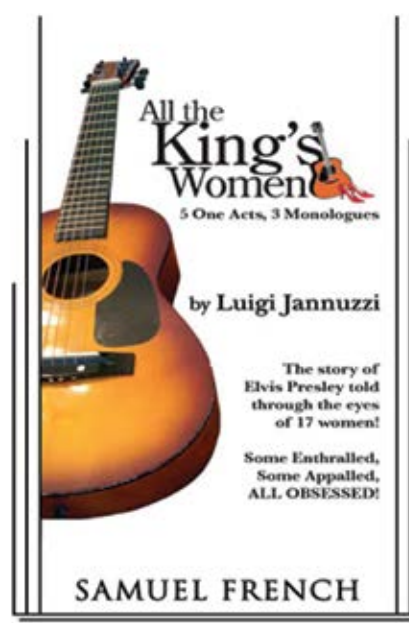
Nancy Eppert (Independence, Missouri) has volunteered with several community theatres as Box Office Chair, director of youth summer camps, Screening Specialist for a school gifted program, Advocate for Arts-in-Education, Board President, Publicity Chair, Secretary, Selection Committee Chair, director, actor, and even dug

conduit trenches for a new theatre. After attending her first AACTFest in 2003, Nancy has volunteered as a member of the Education, Advocacy, and Workshops Committees, and served as Chair of the Education Committee overseeing the implementation of the Technical Theatre Conference, AACTed Hours, and Youth Theatre discussions. She has also served on several task forces and subcommittees, most recently working on the implementation of AACT Chat. She is also an AACT Adjudicator. Nancy serves her community as the Artistic Director of the "Enchanted Forest," a non-scary Halloween event, attracting 4,500 people over four nights and raising approximately \$10,000 dollars each year. She is employed as the Artistic Director of the City of Independence, Missouri's First Person Interpreters Program. She and her husband, John, live in the Truman Historic District of Independence.



Sue Ellen Gerrells (Alabaster, Alabama) has been a force in community theatre for the past 55 years. From co-founding theatres in Singapore and San Diego, to performing and directing in Singapore, Ireland, Japan, and various places throughout the U.S., she brings her love of theatre with

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her wherever she goes. Currently serving as Artistic Director of South City Theatre, Pelham, Alabama, Sue Ellen has worked tirelessly over the years for the Alabama Conference of Theatre, as well as the Southeastern Theatre Conference and AACT where she serves as an adjudicator, Endowment Fund Trustee, Festival Commissioner, and AACT Ambassador. "Community theatre has given me so much," she says. "I can utilize my creativity and imagination, and, most important, make life-long friends. I love the collaborative nature, as well as the discipline of play production. Simply put, community theatre is home."



Linda Miller (Prescott, Arizona) has served community theatre at the local, state and national levels for over 26 years. Beginning as part of a two-person staff, she eventually served six board terms and chaired many performance and fundraising committees. Artistically, Linda has been involved in over 60 theatre productions. She has served 18 years as the AACT Arizona Representative, chaired Arizona's first state AACTFest, organized three Arizona community theatre conferences, and initiated Arizona's participation in two regional and national AACTFest competitions. Linda is a past member of the AACT Board of Directors, has participated on AACT task force groups, the Festival Commission, and Workshop, International, Awards, and Membership Committees. "Traveling with AACT, I have come to see that each theatre represents individuals working together to enhance life in their community, create entertainment, provide education, build empathy, and support the local economy. Community theatre is an amazing and valuable part of our country's cultural landscape; it changes lives."



Kathy Pingel (North Port, Florida) served as Director of Education and Youth Programming at the Des Moines Community Playhouse for ten years, until her retirement in 2015. She also served as Artistic Director of the Kate Goldman Children's Theatre. Kathy holds a BA in theatre from Eastern Michigan University, an MA from Northwestern University in Performance Studies and an MAT from Northwestern. After graduation, she taught in Illinois then worked as a freelance director and outreach coordinator for Orlando Repertory Theatre. At the Des Moines Playhouse, Kathy directed over 50 productions. She has adjudicated at the state, regional, national, and international levels for AACT, and in 2015 taught AACT's Adjudication Workshop at the national festival. Kathy also facilitated AACT's Theatre Education Directors Conference in 2010 and 2016. In 2016 she and her husband, Ron Ziegler, won the Cloris Leachman Award from the Des Moines Social Club for best direction of *The Hobbit*. Kathy was also nominated for best director by Jay Handelman for her work on *Metamorphoses* at Venice Theatre. In retirement, Kathy freelances as a play editor, director, and teacher in her new home state of Florida.

Art Cole Lifetime of Leadership Award

Honors a lifetime of leadership in community theatre by members of AACT who have provided leadership at the national level, in addition to local and/or regional levels.



Julie Crawford (Fort Worth, Texas) grew up in theatre, participating in children's theatre and watching her parents' involvement in Brownwood, Texas, community productions. She holds a BA in theatre and group communications from the University of North Texas, and is a trained adjudicator and workshop leader. She served as Executive Director of Denton Community Theatre in Texas. Julie has been recognized as a Fellow of both AACT and the Southwest Theatre Association (SWTA), and as Volunteer of the Year by SWTA. She received the SWTA Distinguished Service Award, and was recognized by Texas Nonprofit Theatres with its Ovation Award. Julie serves on the boards of both the Live Theatre League of Tarrant County and Stage West in Fort Worth. For AACT, Julie has participated as a Board Member, Region VI Rep, and Vice President for Planning and Development. For the past 23 years, as AACT's first full time Executive Director, she has provided strong leadership in support of the organization's growth in programming, services, membership, budget, and staff.



Linda M. Lee (Fort Worth, Texas), Executive Director of Texas Nonprofit Theatres (TNT) since 1995, is a Cum Laude honors graduate of Texas Christian University, with a BFA in theatre. She began her professional career as a company member at Casa Mañana, where she served for six years in various capacities as actor, teacher, costumer, and administrator for the playhouse. In 1979 Linda joined the fledgling Creative Arts Theatre & School in Arlington, Texas, as an administrative consultant—later becoming Administrative Director, director for mainstage productions, composer, and photographer. She serves as Treasurer of the Live Theatre League of Tarrant County and

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has served AACT as both President and VP for Education. Linda is an AACT Fellow, a member of the College of Fellows of the Southwest Theatre & Film Association, and Treasurer of Texans for the Arts. The TNT board will miss her leadership as she retires this summer.

Diamond Crown Organization Award

Recognizes longevity and vitality of AACT member theatres that have expanded programming and/or facilities in the past ten years and have the administrative leadership to remain vital to their communities for the next ten years. Recipients must have been in continuous operation for seventy-five years and organizational members of AACT for the past ten years.



Bay City Players, Inc. (Bay City, Michigan) began as an afternoon of one-act plays in Mrs. Grinnell's living room, March 17, 1917. In 1954, the Players took out a mortgage on a movie theatre, making major structural

changes. A 5,000 square foot addition was completed in 1994, funded by state and local grants, as well as strong community support. Property west of the theatre became available, and in 1998, the theatre grew even larger. In 2014, the most recent improvements were completed, once more supported by a proud community of 34,000. Programming has also grown, including more productions, summer youth programs, and the "Recyclables" senior readers theatre. As the result of a grant to hire a consultant in operational effectiveness, theatre staff grew to include the addition of a permanent part-time Operations Manager. Bay City Players' life force has always been its volunteers, and it celebrates 100 years of great community theatre because of 100 years of great community volunteers.

Twink Lynch Organizational Achievement Award

Recognizes AACT Member theatres for successfully completing major steps in new directions, expanding services to their community, or moving to the next level of organizational development.



Encore Stage & Studio, Inc.

(Arlington, Virginia) founded in 1967, is a children's theatre that creates casts comprised entirely of students ages 9-18. The theatre invites children ages 12-18 to participate as backstage crew members, board operators, house managers, and stage

managers. Until 2010, when their first Executive Director was hired, Encore was managed solely by a small team of dedicated volunteers. Since 2012, staffing has expanded to include six full-time and two part-time staff members, an arts administration apprentice, multiple summer interns, and hundreds of production and education contractors. In just six short years, the organization's budget has grown from \$225,000 to \$750,000, and programming has expanded not only in the number of shows per season, but in various camps, educational, and business partnership activities. The theatre has been recognized for its consistently excellent programs and was featured in a Backstage.com article entitled "12 Great Children's Theatres across the U.S."



Theatre Lawrence (Lawrence, Kansas)

is currently celebrating its 40th Anniversary Season. Started by a handful of people pooling \$500 to do a single show, the theatre grew and expanded into a viable organization buying and converting a former church in 1984. In 2013, the theatre made a quantum leap by successfully completing a \$7.2 million

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capital campaign to build a new theatre and education facility. With 97% of funding coming from the private sector, the 35,000 square-foot facility now serves its community with state-of-the-art space, as well as new programming including the Hiebert Concert Series (classically trained, national award winning young pianists), “Live in the Lobby” small shows, summer partnerships with Boys & Girls Club, Lawrence Opera Theatre, the Lawrence Parks & Recreation Department, and after school and winter break programming for kids.

David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award

Recognizes individual members of AACT for significant, valuable, and lasting service to community theatre.



Joan Luther (Naples, New York) has been an important contributor to the Theatre Association of New York State (TANYS) since she took the adjudicator training in the early 2000s. Since that time, she has become one of TANYS's very active and most requested adjudicators, averaging 20 adjudications a year. Joan was elected to the TANYS Board of Directors soon after

becoming an adjudicator, eventually serving as president from 2008-2011. She is currently serving a second term as president, ending in 2017. Joan worked closely with the indomitable Ruth Legg to apply for and win the right to host AACTFest 2011 national festival. When Ruth suffered a stroke in 2011, Joan stepped in to fully chair the festival and fulfill TANYS' commitment. Joan is a dynamic personality who succeeds in getting things done, all while maintaining a pleasant demeanor. Her direction as president will have a lasting impression on TANYS as all involved strive to live up to her expectations.



Jon Douglas Rake (Tacoma, Washington) has been the Region IX Rep since 2004. During his tenure, he has traveled throughout the Pacific Northwest to help states develop festivals and state associations. His efforts have enabled theatres within those states to benefit from AACT programs and services, and to form stronger theatre-to-theatre relationships. In 2009, Jon chaired

the National AACTFest, co-hosted by his theatre, Tacoma Musical Playhouse, and the Washington Community Theatre Association. He and his team pioneered new ideas and set the bar high for future festivals. For many years, Jon has served AACT on the Festival Commission, Membership Committee, International Committee, and other related groups. He was elected an AACT Endowment Trustee in 2011 and currently serves as chair of the Trustees. Jon brings calm and steadfast leadership to his volunteer projects, laying a strong foundation for those who will follow after him.

Distinguished Merit Award

Presented to individuals and organizations in recognition of contributions made to promote and develop the highest standards for community theatre.



Alan Buxkemper (Stuttgart, Germany), a member of U.S. Army Europe Entertainment (AACT Region X), has selflessly served U.S. Armed Services members and their families for 27 years. He began as a Music Specialist and Music Center Director, where his professionalism and talent greatly enhanced the quality of an already successful music and theatre program.

Alan made the least experienced volunteers shine and feel good about themselves and their performances. His concern, empathy, generosity, and talent have been instrumental in helping U.S. Army Europe Entertainment meet its mission of providing recreational opportunities for soldiers and their families. Alan's work has been recognized with numerous U.S. Army Entertainment Awards. “The volunteers are our life-blood at the Stuttgart Theatre Center,” he says. “I truly wish this award could be chopped up into little pieces to share with my colleagues and all of the volunteers who are keeping the art of theatre alive for those serving their country in the Stuttgart Military Community.”



Dr. Alan D. Kaplan (Manchester, New Hampshire) is the founder (2002) and artistic director of Manchester Community Theatre Players. He has been associated with community theatre for 62 years as a performer, make-up artist, technical director, set and lighting designer, choreographer, and stage director. Parallel with his duties of producing and directing six

shows annually, over the past eight years, Alan has served as the volunteer director and teacher for aspiring directors with the Amherst PTA annual musical production, which raises funds for primary school education and enrichment programs. He is the recipient of the 2014 New Hampshire Good Samaritan Award for his theatre work with both adults and children, and has served as a judge and educator for the 2016 Regional Idol Scholarship Competition. Two of his five children have chosen to work in the performing arts, and his wife Emilie is the spotlight operator for shows and the brightest light in his life.



André Bruce Ward (Moscow, Tennessee) has been responsible for the indelible, exceptional signature of form and fashion on Theatre Memphis stages for 40 years and with over 250 productions. Receiving his formal training at the esteemed Ringling College of Art and Design, André studied not only art history, life drawing, color and design, but also costume construction and

sewing. Although he has designed for professional companies,

including summer stock and off-Broadway, André's commitment is to community theatre, and to a standard of excellence that he set and continues to maintain. His vision for costume artistry has garnered Theatre Memphis, the state of Tennessee, and himself a stellar reputation throughout the Southeast region. It is no coincidence that, in Memphis' annual city-wide theatre competition, André is at the top of the list with the coveted Memphis Ostrander Theatre Awards for an artist in any category to date: 22 awards and still counting.



Tacoma Musical Playhouse (TMP) (Tacoma, Washington) was founded with the vision of providing live musical theatre, at an affordable price, to a community with a long-established dramatic theatre scene.

Presenting musical theatre with a live orchestra for every production had not previously been done in the area. After holding fundraisers in friends' homes to raise money for small-scale shows, the company developed a group of loyal patrons—many of whom are still with the company today. When an old theatre building became available, the company took the plunge and purchased a permanent home. Throughout its 23-year history, TMP has been an incubator for talent. Programming now includes an education department teaching a broad range of theatre subjects, and school outreach introducing live theatre to young patrons. Beginning with nothing and renting church basements for the first few years, TMP leadership and the intuitive guidance of Jon Douglas Rake have taken the company to success and a \$2M annual budget.

Special Recognition Award

Presented to persons or organizations whose contributions to community theatre are far reaching and of a special nature.



Chester Eitze (Austin, Texas) has been Executive Director of the Bastrop (TX) Opera House for the past 32 years. He began his theatrical career in his hometown of Austin by enrolling in Mrs. Mobley's speech class at age five. After pursuing a Bachelor's in Drama Education and a Master's in Directing, he was offered the position of Special Activities Coordinator with Austin

Parks and Recreation. There, Chester was able to build an arts curriculum, meld it with recreation, and direct the Zilker Park Outdoor Musical. Chester served as the Artistic Director of the Austin Civic Theatre, until moving on to become Artistic Director of Bastrop Opera House. In Bastrop, he built a theatre program as a tourism destination, preserving the landmark structure, and developing youth, adult, and senior performance programs. Chester served on the Board for Texas Nonprofit Theatres from 1999 through 2017, and over his 32 years of service has had an enormous impact on theatre, both locally and throughout the state.

National Awards continue on page 28 ►

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How to Close the Gap Between Your Community and the Big Apple:

How Beaverton Civic Theatre partnered with Straight From New York to bring a bit of Broadway to its local community.

By Nils Holst

It's 2 pm on a rainy Saturday in early October, and Olivia Noelle is about to meet a bona fide Broadway star.

Noelle, who played the role of Wednesday Addams in Beaverton Civic Theatre's (BCT) production of *The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy*, is going to meet Krysta Rodriguez, who originated the role of Wednesday when the show first debuted on Broadway in 2010.

"I was more than a little flustered," Noelle recalled. "But very excited too!"

Noelle was one of 15 BCT actors participating in a musical theatre masterclass event organized by BCT and Straight From New York (SFNY), an agency that pairs Broadway actors with students and community theatre organizations all across the country.

The opportunity was too good to pass up

An hour later, Noelle was singing "A Way Back To Then" from the musical *[title of show]* for Rodriguez. The Broadway actor worked with Noelle one-on-one for about 15 minutes, coaching her on how to connect with the music on a deeper level and deliver a more powerful performance.

"I often get stuck on simply 'presenting well,'" said Noelle. "It's one thing to know the words by heart and be comfortable with the melody...she taught me to break down a song and find

ways to connect with every single word. It was amazing, and something I'll never forget."

It's this kind of personalized feedback from an industry professional that BCT founder Melissa Riley was hoping for when she partnered with SFNY for the masterclass.

SFNY sent Riley a "cold call" email after learning that BCT was putting on a production of *The Addams Family*, and offered to send one of the original Broadway cast members to meet with BCT's actors.

Riley didn't pay much attention at first – the original workshop proposal from SFNY focused only on *The Addams Family* cast members, whereas BCT is more interested in events that benefit the community as a whole.

The opportunity was too good to pass up though, and Riley negotiated a masterclass workshop and Q&A session that would be open to the entire community, not just the 20-person *Addams Family* cast.

"As a community theatre, BCT actively looks for opportunities to engage the community," said Riley. "Over 100 people auditioned for the 20 roles in *The Addams Family* – we wanted to offer the masterclass to everyone, not just the 20 who were cast in the show."

BCT used several different tactics to market the event

SFNY agreed to the revised terms and a date was set for the masterclass, and the theatre got to work financing the event. It was very important to Riley that ticket prices stayed affordable, meaning the bulk of the money had to come from grants. Because of the timing of the event the deadline for most grants had already passed however, leaving the theatre with few options.

In the end Riley applied for only one grant – a community grant from the Beaverton Arts Commission, an organization run by the city government that had funded BCT events in the past. It was a relief when the Commission approved the application, as BCT would not have been able to afford the workshop otherwise.

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About six weeks before the masterclass SFNY informed the theatre that their visiting actor was to be none other than Krysta Rodriguez, whose credits include a variety of Broadway productions including *Spring Awakening*, *Into The Heights*, and *First Date* as well as an appearance in the second season of NBC's musical drama *Smash*.

"We were thrilled to have Krysta as our artist," said Riley. "She seemed like a perfect fit for community theatre...part of BCT's mission is education, and it's a great educational opportunity to have a professional Broadway artist visiting to share her experience and training with the community."

With the visiting artist locked down, the theatre's next task was to fill enough seats to make the masterclass worthwhile.

BCT used several different tactics to market the event, said Amanda Clark, a BCT board member who manages most of the marketing for the theatre. They reached out to local news websites and publications to gain some traction in the press, posted event information in local theatre forums and the theatre's e-newsletter, and utilized Facebook events and groups to get the word out. The marketing efforts drew approximately 45-50 people to the event.

"We were very excited about this unique opportunity at such an affordable price," said Clark. "The turnout wasn't as high as we were expecting, but since the group was more intimate the attendees received more personalized attention and Krysta was able to answer everyone's questions. The quality of the individualized feedback and career advice she provided was definitely masterclass caliber."

That feedback and career advice is vital to bridging the gap between Broadway and community theatre, said Riley, and recognizing that the information transfer at these types of workshops is not always just from the professionals to the community.

"Broadway is between 41st and 53rd streets and includes 41 theatres," Riley said. "There's so much more high quality theatre happening in the U.S. than just what happens in those blocks...guest artists and workshop participants can learn from each other!"

"Closing the gap between Broadway and community theatre is valuable," Riley added. "It's an opportunity for the community to realize the similarities and differences between Broadway theatre and BCT theatre. Krysta, referring to BCT, said 'this is Broadway.' She continued to explain that Broadway might have a bigger budget, but the connections between the characters and the performance quality at BCT is the same." ♦

Nils Holst volunteers as a media assistant with the Beaverton Civic Theatre. He has written for several newspapers in Oregon, and currently lives in Portland with his wife and two cats.

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Special Recognition Award *continued*



Nathan Records (Kaiserslautern, Germany) started working with U.S. Army Entertainment on a voluntary basis as an active duty soldier. After completing his military service, he received his Master's Degree in Directing in 2007. In 2009, Nathan was hired as a U.S. Army Europe Entertainment Director at KMC Onstage (USAG Rheinland-Pfalz Community Theatre).

KMC Onstage had at one time been an active Army theatre program. However, before Nathan's arrival, the program had languished for several years, due to recurrent staff vacancies and lack of strong management. Nathan's dedication, hard work, and initiative quickly turned the program back into a vibrant and active community theatre, serving the largest American community outside the continental U.S. His professional standards and dedication not only brought awards for U.S. Army Entertainment, but created a loyal and enthusiastic audience base. Nathan's departure was a significant loss to KMC Onstage, but his efforts have positioned U.S. Army Entertainment to move forward under new leadership.



The Frank Lee Family and the Jack K. Ayre & Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation (Fort Worth, Texas) have together helped the AACT New-

PlayFest, now in its third cycle, to become a significant AACT program, modeled after the Texas Nonprofit Theatres' "POPS! New Play Project." A big factor in this program's success is the funding provided by the Frank Lee Family and the Jack K. Ayres and Frank Ayres Lee Theatre Foundation. Linda Lee and her siblings, first through personal contributions, and then through the Theatre Foundation they formed, have enabled AACT to grant \$4,000 to each theatre producing a new play. In addition, their efforts have provided \$4,000 per cycle to help AACT cover administrative costs of the program. Both participating theatres and playwrights have spoken highly of the benefits they have realized. The thousands of dollars contributed by the family and the foundation have made a difference that is, indeed, "far reaching and very special."



Installation Management Command – Europe Region Entertainment has, for over 60 years, offered U.S. Service Members, U.S. civilians and their families serving overseas the opportunity to participate in and enjoy high quality music and theatre programs. There are nine U.S. Army Entertainment Branches at Army Garrisons in Germany, Italy, and Belgium. They also support and assist theatre groups in Turkey

and the Netherlands, and U.S. Air Force theatre groups in Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Army Entertainment Branches in Europe operate as full community theatres, offering complete seasons of comedies, dramas, musicals, and special events for all ages. Many offer classes for youth and adults in acting, directing, singing, and other aspects of theatre arts. Programs are operated by a small staff of professional theatre, music, and technical directors. The program relies on countless community volunteers who serve as actors, directors, designers, choreographers, technicians, costumers, stage hands, painters, builders, ushers, and more.

Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award

Presented to individuals above the age of sixty-five who have faithfully served community theatre on a non-paid basis for over twenty-five years.



Sally Barnes (Broken Arrow, Oklahoma) has for more than 25 years been the most active theatre volunteer in Tulsa, and perhaps the entire state of Oklahoma. She has served as a stage manager or performer in over 60 productions with seven different companies. Sally has not only been a star stage manager and performer for the past three decades, but has remained active in

the administrative and board aspects of several companies. She continues to be active as the Treasurer (and previous President) for the Oklahoma Community Theatre Association and has worked on workshops, conferences, and festivals since 2012. Sally was a guest of honor at the state capital when Theatre Tulsa was presented the Oklahoma Arts Council Governor's Arts Award for Community Service. Her commitment and loyalty to Theatre Tulsa remain invaluable.



Gloria Filean (Des Moines, Iowa) has been involved with the Des Moines Community Playhouse since her early teens, when she and a friend began as ushers. She is in the Playhouse ticket office at least 20-30 hours a week—longer during season ticket renewals. She is the face of the Playhouse for many of its season ticket holders, and her passion and commitment is evident in

everything she does—including the exceptional and personal service she provides all guests. In her work for the Playhouse, Gloria has served a six-year term on its board of directors, and helped with raising funds and event planning. Gloria's husband, Art, has served on the board and capital campaigns, and her children have also pitched in as volunteers. For more than 50 years, Gloria has given her time, talents, and treasure to the Playhouse, and to many local charities and nonprofits.



Barry Fuller (Memphis, Tennessee) has been a volunteer extraordinaire for 46 years. At 87, Barry commands the stage and respect of his fellow actors. "I was never a leading man," says Barry, but with his thirteenth appearance as Scrooge at Theatre Memphis' annual production of A Christmas Carol, he leads all other actors in the theatre's 39 year history of presenting that

Memphis holiday treasure. Barry's characters have stood out over the years, with several performances earning him Memphis Theater Ostrander Awards for theatrical excellence. In 1997 he was awarded the Eugart Yerian Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ostranders ceremony. Barry has performed at many other theatres in town as well—directing, acting, and even a little choreography from time to time. His energy is bright and accessible, and he always brings a consummate professionalism to everything he does. For these past 46 years at Theatre Memphis, Barry Fuller has certainly "blessed us, everyone."



Rita Heizer (Billings, Montana) celebrated her 85th birthday on January 24, 2017. She has been an active volunteer at the Billings Studio Theatre since 1983—34 years of continuous service to the theatre. Rita has served as chair of the play reading committee, and also as that committee's secretary for the past 15 years. She has served as

interim Executive Director, stage manager, assistant director, costumer and props person on too many productions to number. In addition to being a local award winning actress, Rita is also a talented pianist, playing for numerous rehearsals and auditions. She was the first recipient of an award named in her honor—"The Rita," created to recognize an individual who has served beyond what one would consider a normal volunteer... a Super Volunteer, if you will—that's Rita!



Gerri Nichols (Troy, Ohio) is a founding member of Troy Civic Theatre (TCT), established in 1965, and is the only original member still continuously active with productions. Over the past 50 years, she has worked tirelessly as the theatre's primary costumer, providing the costumes for over 110 productions. As the theatre's stock of costumes and props has grown, an off-site storage warehouse—the Gerri Nichols Annex—was obtained, and Gerri has taken on the often thankless task of Annex Supervisor. Over the years, she has been recognized for her designs, earning countless Barnstormer Awards (determined by audiences), as well as Dayton, Ohio community theatre awards, and Ohio Community Theatre Association regional and state level awards. Beyond her work in costuming, Gerri is also director of the TCT Repertory Company, which brings performing art into the community through readers theatre and song.

continued on next page ►



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Brid McBride (Dundalk, Ireland) is a journalist, arts critic, broadcaster and writer who has long been admired within international theatre circles. Brid had a long and fruitful association with the U.S. Army Europe Entertainment program as an adjudicator, workshop leader, and teacher with hundreds of amateur theatre practitioners in Germany, England, Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands. "Professor Mort Clark introduced me to the world of community theatre, as he had connections in every corner of the globe," she says. "He knew who was doing what, and when I, and others who ran the Dundalk International Maytime Festival for over 40 years, were putting programs together, his help was invaluable. He connected people and groups, and those people and groups generally remain lasting friends. My life has been enriched by my love of community theatre. The big, wide world has been shrunk to manageable proportions, and most important of all it has introduced me to life-long friends in all corners of the globe."

Corporate Award

Presented to businesses and corporations for significant financial support of community theatre on a regional or national basis.



The Dow Chemical Company (Midland, Michigan) has provided generous annual financial support to community theatre in the Great Lakes Bay region of Michigan, as well as

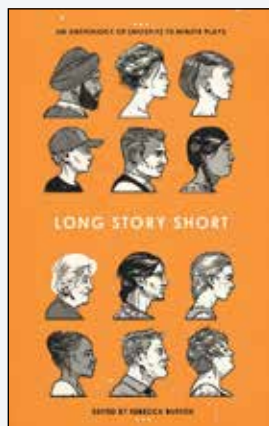
program-specific marketing and employee-driven fundraising and volunteer support. Upcoming productions are promoted through brief lunchtime performances and via email discounts to their "New Hires" group. Dow employees are constantly encouraged to become active as volunteers and as theatre donors. Midland Center for the Arts - Center Stage Theatre invited members of their leadership team to participate in a Fundraising Breakfast for the theatre, which raised over \$250,000 from Dow Chemical employees alone. As members of an organization that focuses on the interplay between art and science, Dow Chemical employees can frequently be seen on stage, behind the scenes, and at the table of the theatre's governing board meeting. Dow's commitment to community theatre through donations of time, capital, and talent truly makes Midland, Michigan a vibrant artistic community and a better place to live. ♦

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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,
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AACT Executive Director, for more information at julie@aact.org



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What's Trending: Producing New Work

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.

Producing New Works was the subject of a Trends survey distributed in March. Responses were received from 68 theatres in 30 states. A wide range of theatres responded, with budgets from \$1,000 to almost \$3.2 million, but most were small; the median budget was \$125,000. About a third of theatres responding are entirely volunteer; 66% pay some people (full-time, part-time, or per show). Half the surveys were completed by volunteers and half by staff.

Interaction with the playwright is often an exciting thing.

It is important for contemporary, well-written plays to be produced, according to 97% of those responding to the survey. But that is easier said than done. Still, 72% of the theatres represented produce new works and 85% of those said they are likely to produce more new works. Although the survey specifically asked theatres to respond even if they don't produce new works, those who do may have been more likely to respond. So these numbers may be high, but it does illustrate

that a significant percentage of community theatres produce new works.

Those who do not produce new works had various reasons, but a large majority, 84%, said, "We don't think our audiences will come see an unknown play." Almost 58% cited trouble finding new works that suit their community. This is evidently a problem for many theatres as several of those that do produce new works checked this reason although it was a question for those not producing. "We aren't experienced in selecting untested works," was the reason for 53% of theatres that do not produce new works. A lack time to find quality new works was a reason for 16%. Only one theatre said, "No one has suggested it."

Interaction with the playwright is often an exciting thing, with almost all theatres (96%) reporting such interaction. This happened in several ways that were asked about on the survey, with theatres reporting:

- 78% - Director communicated with the playwright before and/or during the rehearsal process
- 65% - Playwright was onsite during part of the rehearsal process
- 57% - Director and/or cast suggested script changes to the playwright
- 53% - Playwright suggested script changes during the rehearsal process



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Theatres were also asked to mention other ways they interacted with the playwrights. Twelve percent wrote in that the playwright directed the show. (Over 18% of theatres mentioned local playwrights in their comments. Ten percent of the responders were the playwright of the new work produced.) Athenian Berean Community Theater in Athens, Ohio shared, "Our playwright writes, composes music, and directs, helps with publicity, etc." Community Players in Beatrice, Nebraska has "a staff member who is a playwright and develops a new show for our education program every other year." Other theatres mentioned playwrights in their groups.

**Even with the playwright's help,
marketing an unknown work
is a challenge.**

Theatres reported that playwrights of new works often help with promotion when their show is produced. The playwright attended opening night for 65% of theatres; they participated in talk backs with the audience in 47% of theatres. Playwrights spoke to the media for 59% of theatres and the playwright came in for a Photo Op during the rehearsal process for about a third of theatres. Over 10% of theatres wrote in that the playwright used his or her own social media to promote the show.

Even with the playwright's help, marketing an unknown work is a challenge. Village Players of Fort Thomas in Kentucky noted, "[The] unknown show title made ticket sales more difficult, causing need for additional promotion work." "Promoting the work to garner enough audience to make it financially viable" made the new work production challenging for Chico Theater Company in California. Theatrix USA, based


**Despite the challenges,
producing a new work has great
rewards for the theatre and the
cast and crew.**

in Denver, Colorado has beaten the unknown title challenge, "Initially ... it was selling the concept of original, untested work -- across the board ... to the public, media, etc. But, now that we have a track record, we don't face that obstacle any longer." Chicago Street Theatre in Valparaiso, Indiana also enjoys "audiences [that] like being part of a brand new, never before seen play."

Producing a new work is challenging in other ways. Barnstormers Theatre in Grants Pass, Oregon said the challenge is, "Having to figure out how to turn a two-dimensional script into a 3-dimensional theatre experience." "New material is

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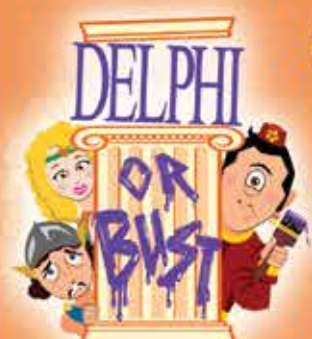
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more likely to have flaws in story or character development, or even have lines that are difficult to interpret,” according to Cheyenne Little Theatre Players in Wyoming. North Carolina’s Hickory Community Theatre found, “New plays need to be workshopped, and the rehearsal process is longer. Therefore, more time must be allocated to the production timeline.”

Working with playwrights can be challenging. Confetti Stage in Albany, New York, shared, “Some playwrights are more willing than others to listen and learn from suggestions.” Pensacola Little Theatre in Florida warned, “When supporting local playwrights, we struggle with objectivity. We did a HORRIBLE [show] a couple years ago, that still affected our marketing two Christmases later. It can be difficult to continually say no even after many edits.”

Producing new scripts often means script changes during the rehearsal process, which can be challenging. The Adobe

Theater of Albuquerque, New Mexico confided, “Fine-tuning of the script meant the cast had to learn multiple changes, not all of them were happy with that process.”

Despite the challenges, producing a new work has great rewards for the theatre and the cast and crew. For South City Theatre in Pelham, Alabama it is “The thrill of doing something new and being involved in the creative process.” Neo Ensemble Theatre in Los Angeles, California agrees, “Getting to help develop a new work..and knowing they were paramount in creating those new roles.” For Confetti Stage in Albany, New York it’s “helping a new artist be heard.” Manatee Performing Arts Center in Bradenton, Florida finds rewards in “working hand in hand with authors, seeing roles tailored to individual talents, working quickly to incorporate changes.” The Changing Scene Theatre Northwest in Bremerton, Washington finds excitement, “As an actor/director, there’s nothing more fulfilling than originating characters!” ♦

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Careers in Theatre

Highlighting Professional Staff Changes in Theatre


Whitefish, Montana – **Whitefish Theatre Company** is pleased to announce **Robert Moody** as the new Technical Director/Production Manager. Robert has worked professionally as a lighting designer, sound designer, stage carpenter, event and stage technician, and most recently as Production Manager for the Hudson Village Theatre Company. Robert is very excited to be joining Whitefish Theatre Company to help maintain its high production standards and to become an integral part of the Whitefish community.

Long Beach, California – **Long Beach Playhouse (LBP)** announces the appointment of **Madison Mooney** as the new Executive Director. Madison began her relationship with the Long Beach Playhouse in 2009 stage-managing its production of *Side Man* while working toward her Theatre Arts degree at Cal State University Long Beach. She immersed herself as much as she could with LBP, stage managing, acting, ushering, bartending, emceeing events, etc. In early 2012 she was hired full time as the Business & Operations Manager. She is excited to take on the new responsibilities of being the Executive Director and leading LBP.

Long Beach, California – **Long Beach Playhouse (LBP)** announces the appointment of **Sean Gray** as the new Artistic Director. After graduating from Cal State University Long Beach with a degree in Theatre Arts, Sean began moving up the ranks at the Long Beach Playhouse. First as Prop Master, then Assistant Technical Director, then Technical Director, then both Producing Artistic and Technical Director. At LBP he has acted in and directed many productions, and wrote a short play for the 24 Hour Theatre Festival. Sean is ecstatic to take on his new position of Artistic Director.

Statesville, North Carolina – **Theatre Statesville** is pleased to announce **Kelley Mitchell** as the new Artistic Director. Kelley has coached Odyssey of the Mind, a competition built on collaborative creative problem solving, and studied vocal performance at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. She proudly worked herself through the ranks of many community theatre tasks including costuming, set construction, and volunteering on her way to becoming an Artistic Director. Theatre Statesville does not have a permanent home, which is challenging Kelley as she explores new and exciting performance opportunities for the theatre. This task thrills Kelley everyday and adds fun and creativity to her job.

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Charles M. Getchell New Play Contest 2018

Submissions (email attachment only) to:
Chair of the Getchell New Play Committee, Darren Michael
setc.getchell@gmail.com

The Charles M. Getchell New Play Contest is dedicated to the discovery, development, and publicizing of worthy new plays and playwrights. One winning script will be selected.

To be eligible for the contest, the submitting playwright must be a current member of SETC, reside in the SETC region, or attend a college or university within the SETC region.

Winner will receive a \$1,000 cash award during the gala banquet and an all-expense paid trip to SETC's 69th Annual Convention in Mobile, Alabama, where both a critique and staged reading of the winning play will be held. The winning play will also be considered for publication in *Southern Theatre* magazine.

One submission per playwright only. Full length plays or related one acts; no musicals or children's plays. Plays must be unproduced (no professional productions; readings and workshops are acceptable) and unpublished.

Deadline: June 1, 2017

Details: setc.org/scholarships-awards/awards/getchell-new-play-contest/

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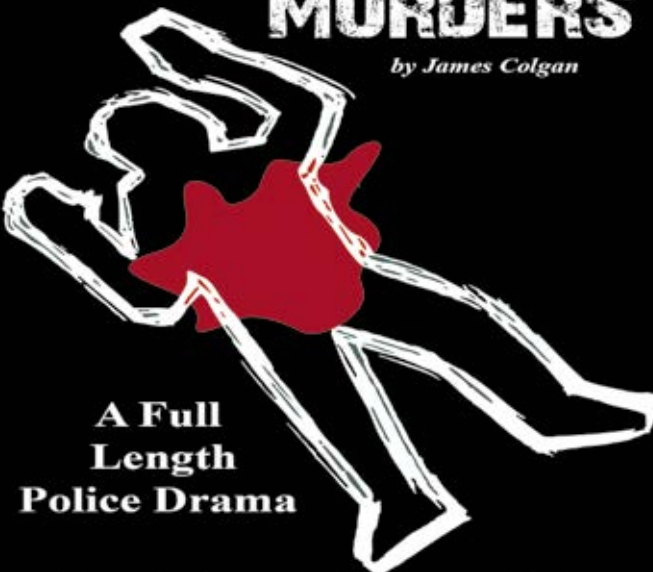
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World Theatre Day 2017

World Theatre Day was created in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute (ITI). An international non-governmental organization, ITI was founded in 1948 by UNESCO and the international theatre community. World Theatre Day is celebrated annually on the 27th of March. Various national and international theatre events are organized to mark the occasion, but many events are local with the purpose of drawing attention to theatre and international harmony.

The 2017 message is from Isabelle Huppert, theatre and cinema actress from France. In the message she says, "Speaking here I am not myself, I am not an actress, I am just one of the many people that theatre uses as a conduit to exist, and it is my duty to be receptive to this - or, in other words, we do not make theatre exist, it is rather thanks to theatre that we exist. The theatre is very strong. It resists and survives everything, wars, censors, penury. It is enough to say that 'the stage is a naked scene from an indeterminate time' - all's it needs is an actor. Or an actress. What are they going to do? What are they going to say? Will



Isabelle Huppert

they talk? The public waits, it will know, for without the public there is no theatre - never forget this. One person alone is an audience."

Each year, a World Theatre Day International Message is circulated, through which, at the invitation of International Theatre Institute (ITI), a figure of world stature shares his or her reflections on the theme of Theatre and a Culture of Peace. The first World Theatre Day International Message was written by Jean Cocteau (France) in 1962. You can read the 2017 full message and messages from previous years at world-theatre-day.org



AACT Web Power

In the last issue of *Spotlight*, we discussed the AACTivity Productions List [aact.org/production-list], which provides a searchable, graded list of productions by AACT-member companies. The AACT website also provides four ways to search for publishers and authors of plays and musicals, all on one page: aact.org/sources

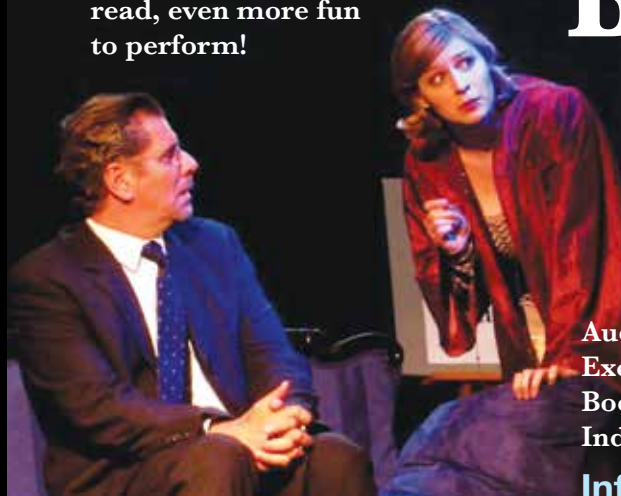
1. Know the title you want, but not who offers it? Use the AACT PlayFinder, a specialized Google search engine that quickly locates who has it.
2. Looking for publishers who specialize in

children's plays, musicals, or other specialized productions? Use the "Browse publishers by category" feature.

3. Interested in new works by up-and-coming authors? Explore the "AACT-Member Playwrights" listings for comedies, dramas, and musicals.
4. You can also access an ongoing project to list every play written or produced in English since 1956.

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ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers offers AACT members a discount on royalties for copyrighted music.

Those involved in theatre know so much goes into creating a solid and successful production. Not only do you want everything on stage to run smoothly and according to plan, but setting the appropriate mood in the theatre through the use of preshow music also aids in enhancing the overall experience for audience members. From the tunes played before the show to the intermission melodies, which assist in carrying the energy from one act to the next, the music is essential ... and costs money. ASCAP offers AACT members a discount on royalties for copyrighted music to help cut down on that cost.

ASCAP's Community Theatre license covers the theatre for the AACT membership year at all its venues. The license includes copyrighted pre-show, intermission, and post-show music played by means other than live performers. It is important to stress, the Community Theatre license does **NOT** cover recorded music during a play or music performed live, such as in a musical revue or string quartet performance.



The Community Theatre license year is September 1 – August 31. Theatres that sign up through the AACT office by September 1 will receive a **30% discount** on the ASCAP license fee. An AACT membership is required to receive the discounted rate. Both AACT membership and ASCAP fees must be received in the AACT office by September 10 along with a signed ASCAP license. (If AACT already has an ASCAP license on file for you, there is no need to send a new one.)

You may wonder why you need an ASCAP license if you already purchased the CD, album, or download. As artists, or people involved in the arts, we understand and respect the need for artists to be compensated for their craft. It is important to remember the only payment composers receive for a creative work is usually through royalties. The amount paid for the CD or downloaded music covers private listening – for you and a few friends – it does not cover a public presentation. Also, most of the amount paid for the CD goes to the record company and performer. Composers and songwriters rely on public performance royalties to earn a living. ASCAP makes that happen.

ASCAP is the oldest, largest, and foremost organization in the United States that licenses the right to publicly perform copyrighted musical compositions. It makes it easy to legally utilize music by providing an annual license at a reasonable flat fee and doesn't require submission of a list of songs to be played. ASCAP is also a membership organization of more than 450,000 songwriters, composers, lyricists, and music publishers. The complete repertoire is available on the ASCAP website (ascap.com).

The generous discount provided to AACT members by ASCAP is just one of the many benefits of an AACT membership. More information may be found at aact.org/ascap.

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David Cockerell



David Cockerell

AACT Corporate Partners Manager Jill Patchin gives a report on activities for the AACTFest 2017 National Festival to the AACT Board at the AACT Winter Meetings in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 9, 2017.



Lynn Nelson

AACT Board members Kris Geddie, Chad-Alan Carr, Lynn Nelson, Sara Phoenix, Chris Serface, Rick Kerby, and Jon Douglas Rake enjoy Vegas "fine dining" at the In-n-Out Burgers in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 10, 2017.



Chris Serface

AACT Board members Rick Kerby, Ron Cameron-Lewis, Chad-Alan Carr, Kristofer Geddie, and Chris Serface take a break from the AACT Winter Meetings at the Park Theatre Las Vegas to see Classic Cher in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 11, 2017.

AACT President Murray Chase presents JoAnne Nissen of Racine, Wisconsin with a 30 year AACT Service Pin during the AACT Winter Meetings in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 11, 2017.

AACT Board member Jim Walker captures a photo of Jon Douglas Rake, Kristi Quinn, Lynn Nelson, Kay Armstrong, and Sara Phoenix as the lively group boards a shuttle to enjoy Vegas at the AACT Winter Meetings in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 10, 2017.



David Cockerell

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Joanne Berry



Co-chairs of the Michigan State Festival Joanne Berry and Joy Butler enjoy a successful festival in Bay City, Michigan, February 12, 2017.

Oklahoma Community Theatre Association (OCTA) Board member Charlie Burns from Woodward and OCTA Board member and AACT Oklahoma State Contact Sally Barnes from Broken Arrow with AACT Board member Sharon Burum at the OCTA Youth Conference at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, March 17, 2017.

Sharon Burum



Doobie Potter of Carpenter Square Theatre in Oklahoma City, AACT Board member Sharon Burum, director Julie Tattershall, AACT VP Festivals Kay Armstrong, and Shonda Currell of the Red Carpet Community Theatre in Elk City enjoy a fun state festival at the OCTA State AACTFest 2017 at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, March 16, 2017.

Sharon Burum



More AACT on the Road on page 42 ►

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Julie Crawford

AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford visits with Arts People Director of Sales Marc Ross at the Arts People booth in the exhibit hall during the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, March 2, 2017.



Oran Dadds

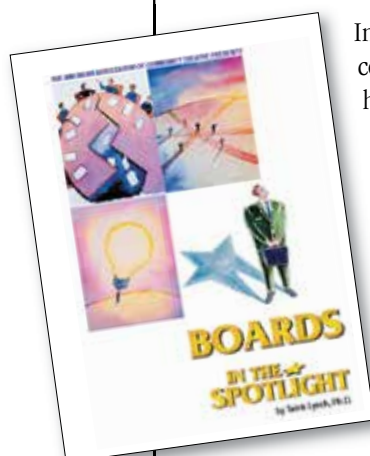
AACT Executive Director visits with Southeastern Theatre Conference 2017 Community Theatre Festival panel moderator Kathy Pingel and adjudicators Steve Earnest and Michael Cochran at the SETC Banquet in Lexington, Kentucky, March 3, 2017.

Southeastern Theatre Conference Executive Director Betsy Horth and AACT Region IV Representative Lynn Nelson present AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford with an Honor for Distinguished Service to American Theatre at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, March 3, 2017.



David Hawkins

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Thanks to AACT NewPlayFest Reviewers

Thanks to these dedicated individuals who reviewed and scored 280 scripts submitted for AACT NewPlayFest 2018. Winning plays will be announced in June and receive world premiere productions at AACT member theatres in 2017 or 2018.
aact.org/newplayfest

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Many theatres utilize talented volunteers for technical positions from designing to construction to running lights and sound. There are many sources of training - a degreed university education, the USITT conference, online training, the AACT TEAM conference, AACTFest workshops, etc.

Where do your tech volunteers get training?

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

Midland Community Theatre has a Production Board of 16 volunteers. These volunteers "chair" several different areas of Build - sets, costumes, props; Crews - lights, sound, dressers, and stage; as well as Front-of-House - ushers, concessions, and bar. The Production Board meets twice before every show to evaluate the crew needs and are then responsible for recruiting other volunteers to fill the spots. For harder shows we specify that we need a "veteran" as a Sound Op or Light Op, but most often we are recruiting new folk and then training them during Tech/Dress. Some of our shows run for five or six weeks so one position may have a crew of three or four to cover all of the performance dates.

If we are doing Special F/X or a show with a lot of weaponry - we have special rehearsals and training scheduled with the Staff.

We also take the time during our Dry Tech (without actors) to teach how to best move scenic units, how to adjust your eyes going into a blackout, and getting the feel for smooth effective

scene changes. Our Staff (Set Designer, Technical Director, and Production Manager) depend upon our volunteers - especially the Production Board Chairs - to give us feedback on the tools they need or adjustments to scenic units (weight, handholds), etc. as well as maintaining the scenery.

Tracy Alexander, Production Manager
Midland Community Theatre, Midland, Texas
mctmidland.org

The Omaha Community Playhouse has had a Theatre Technology Apprenticeship Program for 20 years for this purpose. omahaplayhouse.com/education-and-programming/view/ttap-apprentice-program/

It is a two-year program where students learn about all of the technical aspects of theatre and then concentrate on one area. It is an accredited program in which they receive college credits from Metropolitan Community College. This program is instrumental to how we operate. Not only does it provide us with skilled help currently, but if those graduates stay in the Omaha area, we have a pool of resources. Plus we have five staff members who have gone through the program in positions such as carpenter, wardrobe supervisor, artistic administrative assistant, house manager, etc. Many of our graduates go on to work for companies such as Cirque du Soleil, Blue Man Group, Broadway tours, etc.

Katie Broman, Executive Director
Omaha Community Playhouse, Omaha, Nebraska
omahaplayhouse.com



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Volunteer Accident Insurance – A Little Goes A Long Way!

by Ken Roberts



The field of insurance companies that are willing to write insurance for community theatres is extremely narrow. One of the biggest reasons is the general liability exposure. These companies worry not only about the hundreds of members of the general population who move through our facilities on a nightly basis, but also the volunteers who are climbing ladders, wielding power tools, and participating in all kinds of extraordinary activities both onstage and backstage. These volunteers are absolutely vital to our organizations, and they put themselves

**Are we to let them suffer
financially because of something
we asked them to do?
Can we do without their services?**

in harm's way all too often, and most of the time without even realizing it. Regardless of how much training our volunteers have and how many safety rules we have posted, accidents can and will happen, and who is expected to pay for them? Many of us are fortunate enough to have our own health insurance, but what about the many students, uninsured employees and retirees who grace our stages and don't have the financial means or are in poor health, so they're not able to purchase coverage of their own? Are we to let them suffer financially because of something we asked them to do? Can we do without their services? Can

we afford even one lawsuit because a volunteer is injured? The answer to all questions is "NO!"

Since most insurance companies usually exclude volunteers from the medical payments portion of our general liability, and will sometimes exclude the medical payments coverage altogether, volunteer accident insurance is a way to replace the coverage lost by those exclusions. An extremely compelling reason to consider it is the good will it will create between volunteers and theatres when they know we care enough about them to pay for their injuries when they don't have insurance of their own.

Volunteer Accident insurance pays a specified limit for medical bills, dismemberment, and even accidental death. Policies can even include a per day cash disbursement during hospital stays, and all of these benefits can be provided with a low deductible or even no deductible for the theatres. For just a few dollars a year per volunteer, we can foster more of a spirit of partnership between our theatres and volunteers, as well as reduce the risk for both. When volunteers know that their participation won't cost them anything but their time, they will be much more inclined to take part, and who among us has too many volunteers? A little investment to illustrate that we care can go a long way. ♦



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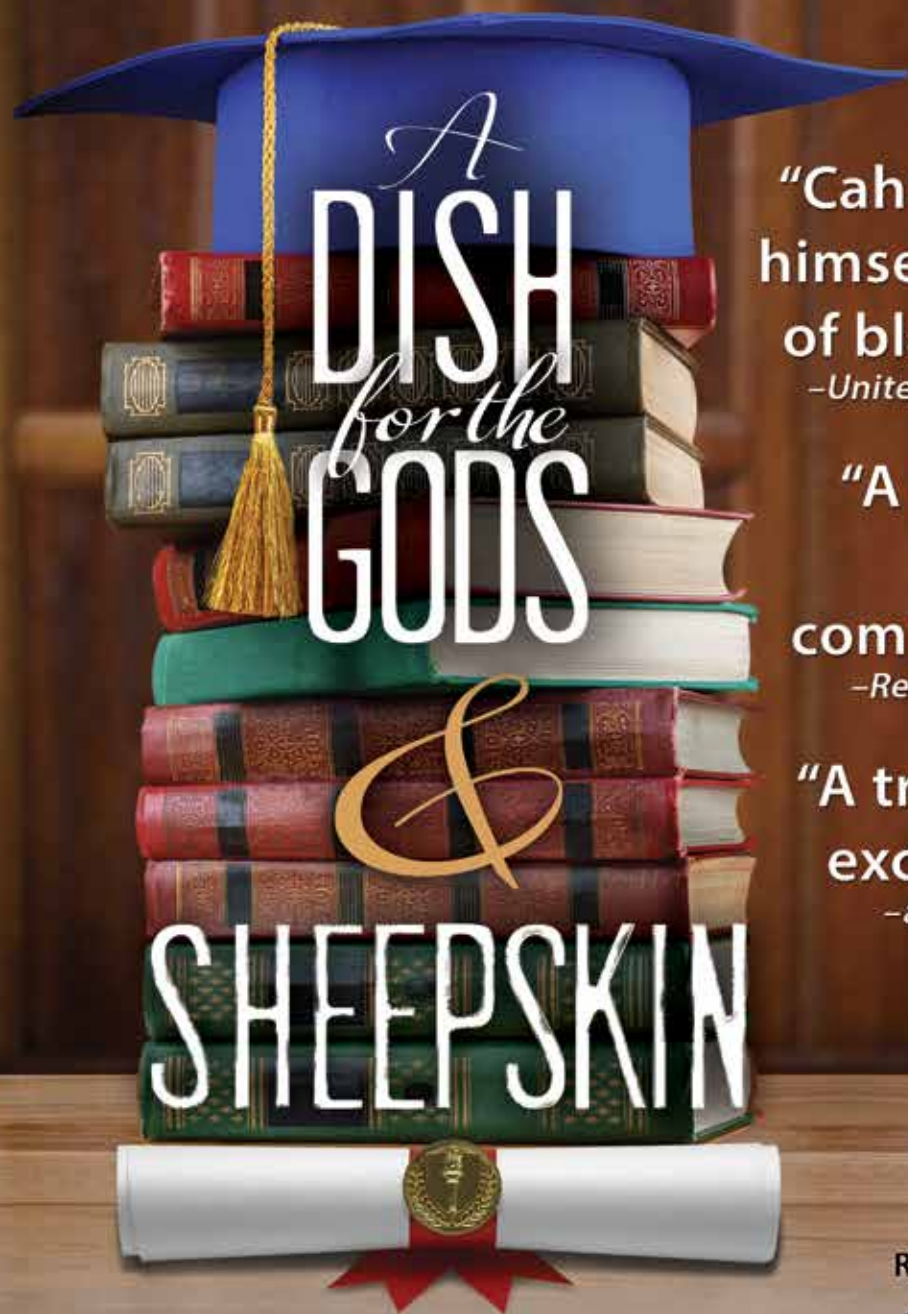
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Do You Hear What I Hear?

by Twink Lynch

Several times I have commented on the need for “active listening” if our theatres are to be effectively managed. I’m sure you’ve all seen the poster that admonishes us:

“I know you believe you understood what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”

Human interaction is fraught with misstatements and misunderstandings, intended or not. How much grief — and time! — we could save ourselves if we did a better job of transmitting and receiving messages in the first place!

Communications expert Don Fabun says there are two common causes of communication failure: 1) assuming everyone knows what we are talking about, and 2) assuming we know what others are talking about (without asking questions to be sure). Fabun tells us that communication is “the process of creating a meaning.” But this is problematic because meaning resides in the minds of both the people sending and receiving the words. While words are the most important tool available to the human race, there are hundreds of thousands of words in the English language alone and more than 2000 are used daily by an educated adult. The trouble is that the 500 words most frequently used have over 14,000 dictionary definitions! How naïve we are to imagine that we can have congruence of meaning in our use of language without checking to be sure.

Active listening, then, is the conscious choice to become actively responsible for clarifying and checking the meanings, content and intent of what we say to one another, verbally or non-verbally. Since human beings tend to judge, evaluate, approve or disapprove the statements of others, we can avoid this tendency by listening with understanding (empathy), trying to see the expressed ideas and attitudes from the other person’s point of view; attempting to sense how it feels to her; trying to put ourselves in the speaker’s frame of reference in regard to the thing she is talking about. This is, of course, most difficult when we have feelings that are in conflict with those of the speaker.

But by listening and responding positively (non-judgmentally), we will demonstrate to the other person we really care about his/her ideas, feelings, and contribution to the discussion — and, therefore, according to renowned psychologist Carl Rogers, that we really care about her as a person, even if we disagree with the ideas and/or feelings she is sharing. This is perhaps the most important thing we can ever do for another human being. The more we respect and empathize with another person, the more he will trust us; the more trust there exists between us, the better our shared creation of meaning will be; the better we process meaning together, the better our relationships will be. Now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if our Boards, committees, and rehearsing groups could create this kind of atmosphere in which to do their work?

Of course, it is risky to do this kind of active listening, because by being really open to another person’s ideas and really trying to understand her point of view, we are opening ourselves up to being influenced by those ideas and feelings to the point where we could be changed! Are we really ready for that?

Active listening is a learnable skill. That was reinforced for me when I attended a fundraising seminar given by Bill Sturtevant of the Institute of Charitable Giving. Bill has kindly given me permission to share some

of his ideas with you. He believes, for example, that we are not effective listeners because 1) we never learned how (have you ever seen those talk shows like the McLaughlin Group?); 2) listening requires focused concentration (how can we do that and read the paper at the same time?); and 3) our own paradigms (views of the world/inner filters) distort what we hear.

Some of our poor listening habits include:

1. We do all the talking.
2. We interrupt (and often aren’t aware of it).
3. We avoid eye contact (and thus miss out on important non-verbal cues).



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4. We put words in the speaker's mouth (and hate it when someone does it to us).
5. We put people on the defensive with our questioning style.
6. We digress with our own stories (theatre people excel at this).
7. We overdo our feedback (verbally or non-verbally).
8. We make judgments while the other person is speaking.
9. (And this is my addition.) We prepare our own response instead of listening fully to the other person (which leads to #2, interrupting).

Bill has these tips for becoming an effective listener:

1. Demonstrate interest through body language (leaning forward) and verbal feedback ("I see," "what happened next?" etc.).
2. Be sure we understand first and seek to be understood second (remember the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: "Lord, let me not seek so much to be understood as to understand").

let me not seek so much to be understood as to understand").

3. Pay attention to non-verbal cues, but don't get trapped by "psycho-babble" into over-interpretation.
4. Listen for – and be open to – new ideas.
5. Focus on the speaker and not on ourselves (asking questions helps us to do this).

Questions are helpful because:

- they reveal needs and values;
- they expose problems, especially in understanding/building a mutual meaning;
- they uncover motivational "triggers";
- they are an alternative to disagreement and can diffuse contentiousness.

Bill proposes *four types of questions* to help us communicate more effectively:

1. "Confirmation questions" to validate information/data and

uncover inaccuracies ("Do I understand you to mean...")

2. "New information questions" to fill in the gaps in what I don't know ("Could you tell me more about...")
3. "Attitude questions" which should be open ended (not not answerable by yes or no) which help identify needs, values, attitudes and opinions which motivate or drive behavior ("You seem to feel strongly about...")
4. "Commitment questions" which help us test where we are in the relationship ("Are we okay with this?")

Bill has *three tips for asking questions successfully*:

1. Ask permission to ask ("Do you mind if I ask about...")
2. Build on previous responses (shows we've paid attention)
3. Avoid jargon — it puts people off, makes them feel unequal in the relationship.

Like any new or forgotten skill, active listening takes practice. I urge you to find a friend or group of friends willing to try it. Have A and B talk to one another and C watch and give feedback. Take this skill seriously, practice it faithfully, and a win/win climate will prevail in your theatre, I guarantee it. Break all legs! ♦

For you fundraisers out there, Bill Sturtevant has a superb book, *The Artful Journey Cultivating and Soliciting the Major Gift* (Institutions Press). Available from the AACT Bookstore (aact.org/bookstore).

Reprinted from Boards in the Spotlight, page 83

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.

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When	Who/What	Where	Information
June 22-24	Colorado Theatre Festival 2017	CO Salida	303-674-5037 cctcfestival.com
June 25 -27	Community Theatre Management Conference 2017	MN Rochester	817-732-3177 aact.org
June 26 - July 1	AACTFest 2017* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 Award Winning Productions • 4 YouthFest Productions • Youth Leadership Conference • Design Competition & Exhibition • Workshops, Vendor Exhibits • NEW Monologue Competition, AACT Chat • plus more... For more information see page 8 or visit aact.org/17	MN Rochester	817-732-3177 aact.org

* Indicates festival in the 2017 AACTFest Cycle For dates farther ahead, check the website: aact.org/calendar

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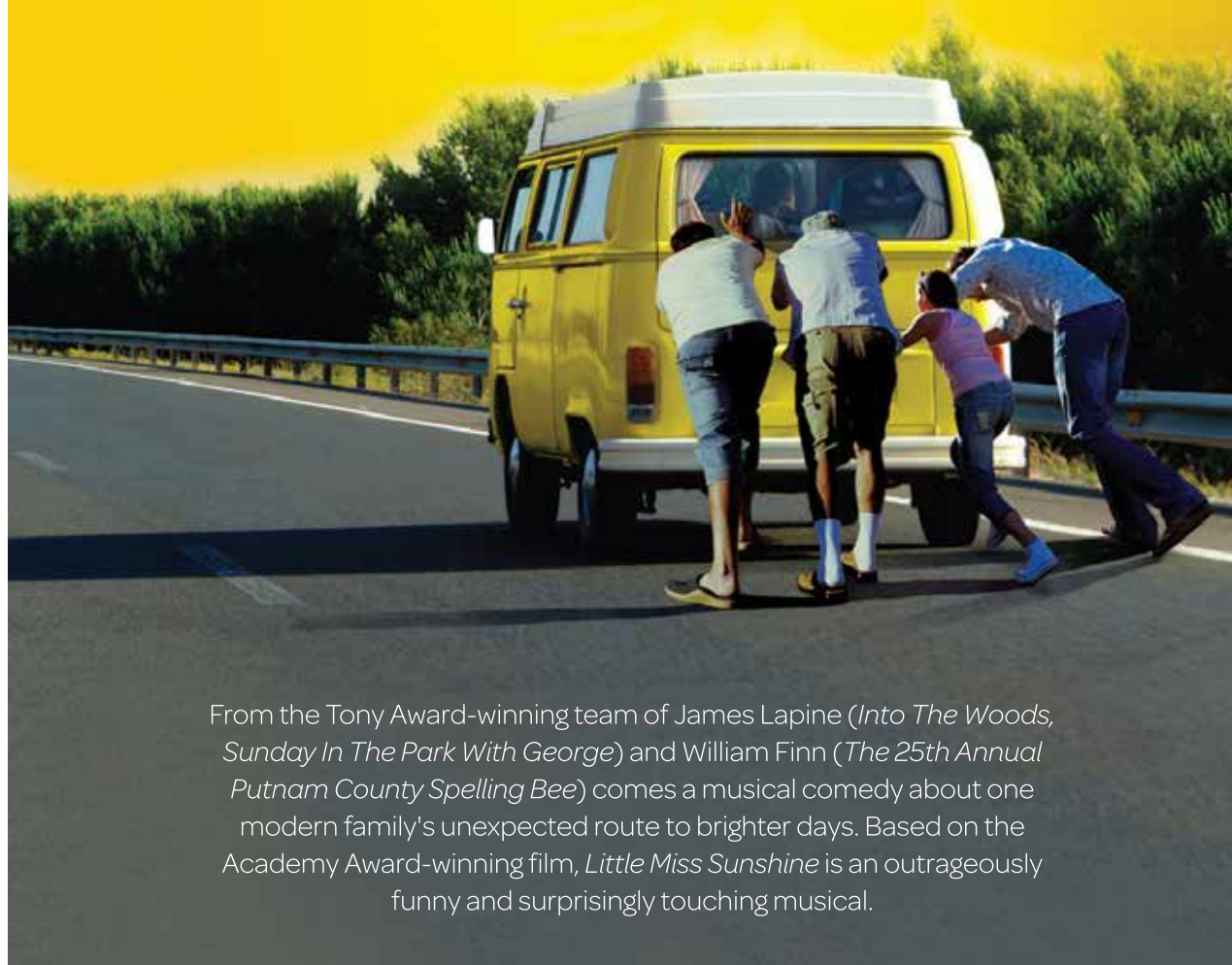
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