

spotlight

July/August 2017 \$3.00

american association of community theatre



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Murray Chase
AACT President
2015-2017

By the time you read this, a number of journeys will have ended. Many more will have just begun.

For a dozen producing companies, the AACTFest cycle will be a fresh memory. The months—and sometimes years—of visioning, designing, rehearsing, traveling—will have finished. But those journeys will live on: in the fruits of the labor, in the awards, the festival networking, the late-night stories of foibles and highlights, the artistic growth, the pride...and the hunger for more. That memory will be the springboard to the next cycle, and the next: the never-satisfied thirst for artistic nirvana.

For the hundreds of companies whose shows were not selected for the national finals of AACTFest, I hope that the next journey has already begun. We may be disappointed in not being selected, but we should never

allow our hopes to be vanquished. Let's just tackle another project: tougher, more rewarding. There's always another journey.

My four-year journey as vice-president and president of AACT ended with AACTFest; this is my last newsletter note. Hundreds of volunteers worked tirelessly during that time to restructure AACT for future growth and better service to all theatres. I thank all of you for that trip, as well. For me, as for many of the dedicated staff and volunteers of community theatre, the journey itself was the reward.



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What's better than theatre classes for physical, mental, emotional, and social growth? Bonnie Vorenberg offers tips on developing senior theatre

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Thanks to AACTFest 2017 Hosts and Chairs

Appreciation for all who served as hosts and chairs at regional and state levels

On the Cover

Gabriela Pagés and Marion Marino in Argentina's La Compasiva Teatro production of *Our Daily Bread* at aactWorldFest 2014 in Venice, Florida. The production garnered five awards: Excellence in Overall Performance, Outstanding Innovation through Technology, Outstanding Actor: Mario Marino, Outstanding Actress: Gabriela Pagés, Outstanding Directorial Vision: Alfredo Badalamenti

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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"None of the classics is half so giddy, nor so utterly entertaining as 'The Jazz Nativity' that burst onto the stage of Orchestra Hall on Sunday afternoon!"

— Howard Reich,
Chicago Tribune

bending TOWARDS the Light *a Jazz Nativity*

"What an awesome experience—worthy of Broadway with fantastic choral and orchestral music, dancing and spiritual messages. Kudos for bringing this wonderful gift to our community!"

— Barbara Gesse,
Greensboro News & Record, NC

Bending Towards the Light... A Jazz Nativity is the traditional Christmas story sung, played and danced from beginning to end.

The music is a combination of traditional Christmas carols, a spirited carol in 5/4 written by Dave and Iola Brubeck, and original music. The story is told by a soprano and a jazz vocal group or full choir with solo roles for the Shepherds, Shepherd Child, Guardian Angels, Mary and Joseph. The band is an eight piece jazz band. The Kings are two instrumentalists and a tap dancer. It is indeed an unusual,

exciting, and moving combination of musical theater, jazz, opera and dance!

In New York we have been thrilled to have some big stars perform: Lionel Hampton, Tito Puente, Harold Nicolas! But every locality has its own stars and the show has received raves in every town that has produced it. Light up your community with "Bending Towards the Light" this holiday season!



Anne Phillips,
composer, arranger,
producer

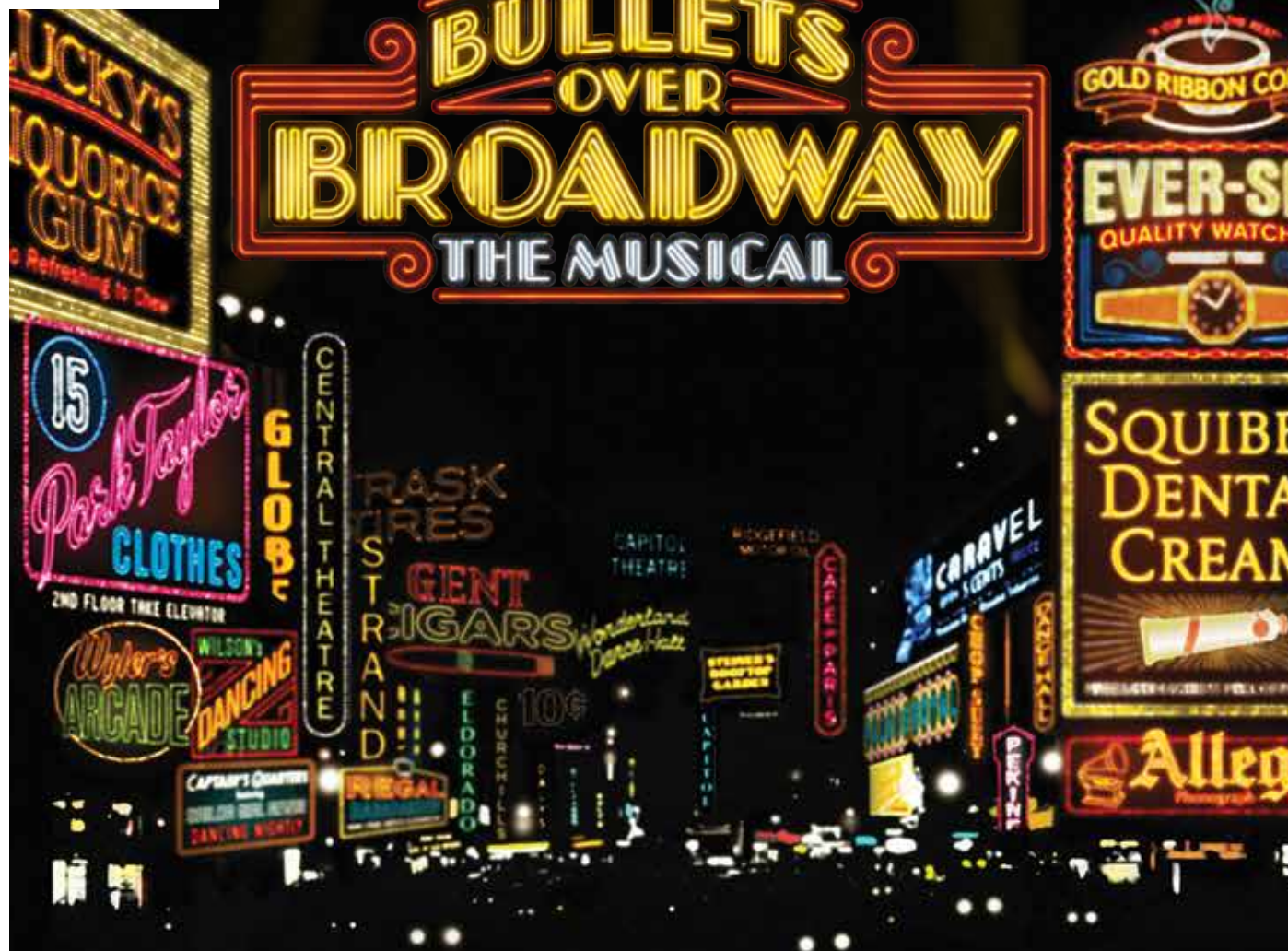
A great, new, and oh-so-theatrical celebration for the holidays...
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go to: annephillips.com contact: annepl4@gmail.com

Photo by Janis Wilkins



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Loaded with big laughs, and colorful characters, *Bullets Over Broadway* is bringing musical comedy back with a bang. Based on the hit 1994 film by Woody Allen and Douglas McGrath, this six-time Tony-nominated musical features fabulous hits from the 1920s, including "Let's Misbehave," "'Tain't Nobody's Biz-ness If I Do" and "There's a New Day Comin'!"

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

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

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
Co-sponsored by AACT
University of Wisconsin - Madison Continuing Studies

AACT Executive Committee

November 3, 2017
Madison, WI
Hosted by University of Wisconsin - Madison Continuing Studies

AACT Staff

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Spotlight

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AACT Insurance Program

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



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AACTFest 2017 National Companies

AACTFest 2017 National Community Theatre Festival presents twelve winning productions at Rochester Civic Theatre this June. Profiles of seven of the AACTFest 2017 National Companies are featured here, and the other five were featured in the May/June issue of *Spotlight*.



Region II
Erie Playhouse
Erie, Pennsylvania
erieplayhouse.org

Erie Playhouse produces 20 productions a year: eight Mainstage, five Youtheatre, concerts, and special events. 2016-17 marked the Playhouse's 100th season, and its participation in the 2017 AACTFest cycle commemorates the company's past (one of the oldest community theatres in the country), celebrates its present, and embraces its future. Erie Playhouse has been away from competition for over 30 seasons, last participating in 1986 with the drama *Bent*, which competed at the national level.



David Sokolowski

The Glorious Ones Book and Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, Music by Stephen Flaherty, Based on the Novel by Francine Prose

Both slapstick and serious, *The Glorious Ones* tells how an Italian acting troupe came to be, capturing the public's adoration with its bawdy comedy and improvisation. In their search for glory and fame, the troupe struggles with the possibility that they may not be remembered. La Commedia!



Region III
Center Stage Theatre
Midland, Michigan
midlandcenter.org

Midland Center for the Arts' Center Stage Theatre is a national award-winning volunteer theatre program with a performance season that draws tens of thousands of theatregoers from across the Great Lakes Bay Region, and includes comedies, tragedies and musicals, from popular favorites to lesser-known titles. In addition to main season shows, its Off-Center Stage productions are works on the cutting edge, and the Peanut Gallery and Interim Theatre programs feature the talents of youth, ages 10 through 21.



Evan Lewis

Venus in Fur by David Ives

Thomas is desperate to find an actress to play Vanda, the female lead in his adaptation of the classic sadomasochistic tale, *Venus in Furs*. Into his empty audition room walks a vulgar and equally desperate actress—oddly enough, named Vanda. Her strange command of the material piques Thomas's interest, and as they work through the script, the line between play and reality blurs, feeding an increasingly serious game of submission and domination that only one can win.

Contains Strong Adult Language and Subject Matter

National Companies continued on next page ►



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Region III
Kokomo Civic Theatre
 Kokomo, Indiana
kokomocivictheatre.org

Kokomo Civic Theatre (KCT) was established in 1949 in the central Indiana community of Kokomo, approximately fifty miles north of Indianapolis. KCT produces a four-to-five show season of musicals, comedies, and dramas, primarily at Havens Auditorium on the campus of Indiana University Kokomo. KCT also offers acting classes for the community. Kokomo Civic Theatre has hosted the Indiana Community Theatre Association State Festival three times in recent years. Kokomo Civic Theatre's production of Freud's Last Session received the Best Show Award at AACTFest 2015 National Festival in Grand Rapids.

Passing Notes by Joe Cameron

A man tells the story of his first love through old, hand-written notes that he and his girlfriend wrote to one another. Together they discover love, experience the joy of infatuation, they laugh and fight, share a first kiss, learn to dance, and most importantly they forge an unbreakable friendship.



Jason Dick



Region V
Dassel-Cokato Community Theatre/FungusAmongus Players
 Dassel-Cokato, Minnesota
fungusamongusplayers.org

Founded in 2008, the company performs in a museum that was formerly an ergot processing plant. (Ergot is a toxic fungus used in pharmaceuticals--hence the name "FungusAmongus.") This is the company's second time representing Dassel-Cokato, Minnesota, a tiny rural community of 2,800 residents, at the AACTFest National Festival, having presented *The Romancers* in 2015. The Fungi collaborate with the Dassel Area Historical Society to stage shows that attempt to reflect a warm sense of nostalgia and positive ethical values.

The Voice of the Prairie by John Olive

Set in the American Midwest in the early days of radio, *The Voice of the Prairie* is the story of Davey Quinn, an orphaned teen, and his companion, Frankie the Blind Girl, who travel the country hopping freight trains, seeking both freedom and invisibility.



Jox Mercalf



Region V
The Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company
 Rochester, Minnesota
 roadtoverona.com

Founded in 2013, The Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company

creates and tours high-energy, audience-immersive, original performances developed through collaborative musical and dramatic improvisation. Accepting their youth as a strength, they embrace and celebrate the non-linear, multi-tasking split focus of electronic devices, social media, and the “messiness” of spontaneous interaction. SkyVault performances play with the forces that cause the inexplicable, often contradictory, motivations and self-destructive actions of characters on (and off) stage.

On the Road to Verona by The Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company



Craig Madsen

A juvenile band of minstrels abandoned on the road decides they don't need middle-aged actors pretending to be teenagers to portray Shakespeare's comic romances. The SkyVault ensemble collaboratively developed their Shakespeare-inspired script and music for this immersive experience, where cast and audience post to Facebook throughout the performance.

National Companies continued on next page ►

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Region VI
Katy Visual and Performing Arts Center
 Katy, Texas
 kvpac.org

Established in 2001, Katy Visual and Performing Arts Center (KVPAC) provides training in visual and performing arts to people of all ages through classes, performance, and exhibition opportunities. KVPAC is home to Encore Players, the award-winning community theatre. Additionally, KVPAC provides off-site arts programs that focus on enriching education within Houston-area school systems, therapeutic artistic experiences serving patrons in area hospitals, and community arts events that transcend differences, foster cultural awareness, and encourage community cohesiveness.

Answers by Tom Topor

Answers focuses on a man detained and questioned for a crime that he claims to know nothing about. He is grilled by two persistent police officers, who call him "Byron" (although he insists this is not his name) as they attempt to force a confession. Ultimately, they succeed—but have justice and truth been served? Or has another victim been sacrificed to society's inexorable need for retribution at any cost?



Linda M. Lee



Region X
SHAPE Performing Arts Centre
 Mons, Belgium

The SHAPE Performing Arts Centre and the Performing Arts School exist to provide diverse theatre, music, and dance programming of the highest quality, which stimulates, educates, and entertains the SHAPE international community. SHAPE is the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe located in Mons, Belgium. The SHAPE Performing Arts Centre was founded in 1967 and the SHAPE Players was created to serve the 28 NATO members that make up the SHAPE community. The SHAPE Players offer a season of four plays and three sessions of classes annually culminating with three recital/performance. SHAPE is a five time Region X winner; the Players performed *Wings* at the national AACTFest 2007 in Charlotte, NC, *Hold Me!* at AACTFest 2009 in Tacoma, WA, *Hauptmann* at AACTFest 2011 in Rochester, NY, and *Detachments* at AACTFest 2015 in Grand Rapids, MI.

Counting the Ways, A Vaudeville by Edward Albee

In a series of blackout sketches, "He" and "She" probe into the nature of their love for one another. Long married or not...?, but aware that time has wrought changes in their relationship, the two spar and thrust at each other in exchanges and reminiscences which are sometimes lighthearted, sometimes poignant, sometimes almost brutal. In the end a mosaic of experience is constructed, illuminating the nature of human love and pointing up the gathering indifference that can beset those who have been perhaps too long and too closely aligned in the sharing of years.



Dan LaMorte

Moving On

All theatres selected to represent their States/Regions in the AACTFest 2017 cycle.

State winners moving on to their regional festival are shown below. Some states qualified to send two shows to the regional festival. Winners of the regional festivals moved 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.

Region	Theatre	From		Production
I	Nashua Theatre Guild	Nashua	NH	<i>Used Car for Sale</i> by Lewis John Carlino
I	The Warner Theatre	Torrington	CT	<i>Facing Backwards</i> by George Kelly
I	Windham Actors Guild	Windham	NH	<i>The Most Massive Woman Wins</i> by Madeleine George
II	Montgomery Playhouse	Gaithersburg	MD	<i>Virtual Reality</i> by Alan Arkin
II	Silver Spring Stage	Silver Spring	MD	<i>The Pirate and the Caterpillar</i> by Macy D'Aiutoto
II	Wilmington Drama League	Wilmington	DE	<i>Post-Its</i> by Paul Dooley & Winnie Holzman
II	Auburn Players Community Theatre, Inc.	Auburn	NY	<i>Almost, Maine</i> by John Cariani II
II	Little Theatre of Wilkes-Barre	Wilkes Barre	PA	<i>Angels In America</i> by Tony Kushner
II	Rochester's Black Sheep Theatre	Rochester	NY	<i>Friends of the Deceased</i> by Jane Shepard
II	Erie Playhouse	Erie	PA	<i>The Glorious Ones</i> by Lynn Ahrens
III	Pulse Opera House	Warren	IN	<i>Nonsense</i> by Dan Goggin
III	Grand Rapids Civic Theatre & School of Theatre Arts	Grand Rapids	MI	<i>25th Annual Putnum County Spelling Bee</i> by Rachel Sheinkin
III	Kokomo Civic Theatre	Kokomo	IN	<i>Passing Notes</i> by Joe Cameron
III	The Drama Workshop	Cincinnati	OH	<i>Unnecessary Farce</i> by Paul Slade Smith
III	Wisconsin Rapids Community	Wisconsin Rapids	WI	<i>The Gin Game</i> by D.L. Coburn
III	Center Stage Theatre	Midland	MI	<i>Venus in Fur</i> by David Ives
III	CenterStage Players	Cincinnati	OH	<i>Acapulco</i> by Steven Berkoff
III	Monticello Theatre Association	Monticello	IL	<i>Love, Loss, and What I Wore</i> by Delia Ephron and Nora Ephron
III	North Riverside Players North	Riverside	IL	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> by William Shakespeare
III	Central Wisconsin Area Community Theater	Stevens Point	WI	<i>The Diary of Adam and Eve</i> by Mark Bucci & Mark Twain
IV	Cookeville Performing Arts Center	Cookeville	TN	<i>The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens, and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord</i> by Scott Carter
IV	Hickory Community Theatre	Hickory	NC	<i>Junk</i> by Molly Bass and Jeff Hartman
IV	Landmark Studio for the Arts	Sutton	WV	<i>Dani Girl</i> by Christopher Dimond and Michael Kooman
IV	Starkville Community Theatre	Starkville	MS	<i>Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike</i> by Christopher Durang
IV	Tupelo Community Theatre	Tupelo	MS	<i>Cicada</i> by Jerre Dye
IV	Theatre Winter Haven	Winter Haven	FL	<i>The Amish Project</i> by Jessica Dickey
IV	Wetumpka Depot Players, Inc	Wetumpka	AL	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> by Tennessee Williams

Moving On continued on next page ►

Region	Theatre	From		Production
IV	Leeds Theatre and Arts Center	Leeds	AL	<i>Rabbit Hole</i> by David Lindsay-Abaire
IV	Mill Town Players	Pelzer	SC	<i>Of Mice & Men</i> by John Steinbeck
IV	Flowertown Players	Summerville	SC	<i>The Zoo Story</i> by Edward Albee
IV	Dalton Little Theatre	Dalton	GA	<i>The Last Train to Nibroc</i> by Arlene Hutton
IV	Spirit of Soul/ Star Center Theatre, Inc	Gainesville	FL	<i>Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill</i> by Lanie Robertson
IV	Buckhannon Community Theatre	Buckhannon	WV	<i>Always, Patsy Cline</i> by Ted Swindley
IV	Paramount Players Paramount Arts Center	Ashland	KY	<i>Cabaret</i> by Kander and Ebb, Book by Joe Masteroff
IV	Theatre Workshop of Owensboro	Owensboro	KY	<i>Who am I this Time?</i> by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
V	Lofte Community Theatre	Manley	NE	<i>Shakespeare's a Dick</i> by Mark Aloysius Kenneally
V	Aberdeen Community Theatre	Aberdeen	SD	<i>Maxis Pleads the Fourth</i> by Paulette Callen, Curt Campbell, Lori Harmel, Eliot Lucas, Warren Redmond, Brian T. Schultz, and Jim Walker
V	Newton Community Theatre, Inc.	Newton	IA	<i>Pvt. Wars</i> by James McLure
V	Community Players, Inc	Beatrice	NE	<i>The Santaland Diaries</i> by David Sedaris, adapted for stage by Joe Mantello
V	Dassel-Cokato Community Theatre/Fungus Amongus Players	Cokato	MN	<i>The Voice of the Prairie</i> by John Olive
V	Wilson Performing Arts Center	Red Oak	IA	<i>A Number</i> by Caryl Churchill
V	The Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company	Chatfield	MN	<i>On the Road to Verona</i> by The Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company
V	Auburn Community Theater	Topeka	KS	<i>A Candle on the Table</i> by Patricia Clapp
VI	Denton Community Theatre, Inc.	Denton	TX	<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i> by Alfred Uhry
VI	Community Players of Hobbs, Inc.	Hobbs	NM	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> by Tennessee Williams
VI	Sand Springs Community Theatre	Sand Springs	OK	<i>Tomato Plant Girl</i> by Wesley Middleton
VI	Katy Visual and Performing Arts Center	Katy	TX	<i>Answers</i> by Tom Topor
VI	OnStage Woodward	Woodward	OK	<i>A Case of Belonging</i> by Jan Alred
VI	The Studio Theatre	Little Rock	AR	<i>Buyer & Cellar</i> by Jonathan Tolins
VII	Longmont Theatre Company	Longmont	CO	<i>Yankee Tavern</i> by Steven Dietz
VII	Theatre Esprit Asia	Aurora	CO	<i>Coming To America</i> by Maria Cheng, Peter Trinh
IX	Tacoma Musical Playhouse	Tacoma	WA	<i>The Addams Family</i> by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice
IX	Pentacle Theatre	Salem	OR	<i>The Zoo Story</i> by Edward Albee
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 Little Theatre	Tacoma	WA	<i>Second Samuel</i> by Pamela Parker
X	SHAPE Performing Arts Centre	APO	AE	<i>Counting the Ways</i> by Edward Albee

Winning Plays of AACT NewPlayFest Announced

AACT NewPlayFest has selected the winning scripts that will be produced at the selected Producing Theatres. The world premiere productions will be between July 2017 and December 2018. Look for profiles of the Winning Playwrights and Producing Theatres, and dates of performances in the next issue of *Spotlight* or online at aact.org/newplayfest-2018.

In addition to the full productions, Dramatic Publishing Company publishes the winning plays in an anthology. *AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)*, with plays by Cece Dwyer, Paul Elliott, Jim Henry, Nedra Pezold Roberts, Barry Weinberg, and Bo Wilson, and *AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 2 (2016)*, with plays by William Baer, A.J. DeLauder, Jeanne Drennan, Thomas Hischak, Karen Lewis, Malcolm MacDonald, and Nedra Pezold Roberts are now available from the publisher's website: dramaticpublishing.com

Congratulations to the AACT NewPlayFest 2018 winners!

***Eternity* by Michael Cochran** will be produced by **Stage III Community Theatre**, Casper, Wyoming

***Finishing School* by Elaine Liner** will be produced by **Elkhart Civic Theatre**, Bristol, Indiana



***Mynx and Savage* by Rebecca O'Neill** will be produced by **The Vortex Theatre**, Albuquerque, New Mexico

***Sweet* by Denise Hinson** will be produced by **County Seat Theater Company**, Cloquet, Minnesota

***TBD (To Be Determined)* by Paul Elliott** will be produced by **Lincoln Community Playhouse**, Lincoln, Nebraska

***Treehouse* by Joseph V Musso** will be produced by **Cottage Theatre**, Cottage Grove, Oregon

The finalists for AACT NewPlayFest 2018 also included:

***Behold* by Tom Cavanaugh**

***Bitten by a Boomslang* by Andrew Black**

***Familiar Strangers* by Lynda Crawford**

***The Assistant* by Ashley Minihan**

***The Paymaster* by Michael Feely**

***Very Best Coffee* by Briandaniel Oglesb**

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aactWorldFest Returns in 2018

Mark your calendars for June 18-23, 2018 when aactWorldFest returns to Venice, FL. Join us for a worldwide weeklong community theatre festival on Florida's beautiful southwest coast. Enjoy performances from every continent, workshops, fellowship, and more!



Registration opens in June at AACTFest 2017 National Festival in Rochester, Minnesota. Register for aactWorldFest 2018 at venicestage.com/international

Prices:

Full Festival (MainStage and Black Box)
for AACT members: \$280

Full Festival for non-members: \$363

Festival on MainStage for AACT members: \$255

Festival on MainStage for non-members: \$338

Special discount for the week of AACTFest only: \$50

Early bird discount before Feb. 1, 2018: \$25

Student discount: \$100 any time

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941-308-7700

\$105 per room. \$135 for a suite.

More hotels are being arranged. Visit aact.org/worldfest

Adjudicators:

Jim Sohre, Benny Sato Ambush, Jan Palmer Sayer. (more info about each: venicestage.com/international/festival-adjudicators-2018/)

Productions: Two productions are already confirmed for aactWorldFest 2018:

- Maner Manush from Italy will present a production of *Michelangelo da Caravaggio* about the famous Italian painter.



- Chipawo from Zimbabwe will present a production of *Who Is a Child?* from their troupe Girl Power.

Visit aact.org/worldfest and venicestage.com/international to keep up with current information about this exciting international festival.

The logo for Shrek The Musical, featuring the word "SHREK" in large, stylized letters, with "THE MUSICAL" below it. The DreamWorks logo is in the top right corner.

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The logo for Art Park Players, featuring a circular seal with the text "ART PARK PLAYERS" and a stylized face.

AACT Goes to Washington

By Carole Ries

I must admit I had some trepidation as I headed for Washington DC in March to participate in Arts Advocacy Day. I've lobbied before, but never in the nation's capital. I didn't know what to expect. I come from a very red state, Kansas. The President's budget had just been released calling for the complete elimination of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, as well as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It seemed pretty dire to me.

Organized by Americans for the Arts, the event brought together a broad cross-section of individuals, along with 85 national organizations working on behalf of the arts in America. Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director, and I represented AACT which was once again a national partner of this important national event.

While Julie stayed with the Texas delegation, I joined up with five other Kansans, representing the Kansas Alliance for the Arts. Our leader set up meetings with our legislators in advance. We joined with over 700 participants representing every state in the union, the largest group ever to participate in Arts Advocacy Day. We spent our first day learning about issues and priorities, role playing (even with a Senator) how to be effective, and were inspired by outstanding national leaders advocating for the arts. We were advised to focus on asking our state delegates to: 1) continue funding the NEA in the amount of \$155M; 2) support Arts Education; 3) support the CREATE Act; and 4) consider the impact of all potential tax reform measures on the individual donors that are the lifeblood of our nonprofit organizations.

On the second day, we spent the morning listening to our national congressional leadership, and the afternoon meeting with our state legislators. I found the meetings with our legislators exhilarating. They listened. Many times we met with senior staff. They were diligent in their effort to communicate our message to their bosses. Overall, attendees had over 400 face-to-face meetings with Congressional leaders and staff on Capitol Hill. Advocates participated from home by sending 150,000 messages to their representatives in support of the arts.

continued on the next page ▶



Carol Ries visits with AACT Lifetime member Ben Vereen at Arts Advocacy Day 2017

Texans for the Arts



Ann S. Graham, Texans for the Arts Executive Director; Dr. Jane Chu, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts; Chris Kiley, Executive & Program Assistant for Texans for the Arts; Marci Dallas, Executive Director of Fresh Arts (Houston); and Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director at Arts Advocacy Day 2017

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U.S. Congresswoman, 2nd District of Kansas, Lynn Jenkins visits with Carole Ries, Kansas Arts Alliance Executive Director Ken Adams, Annika Wooton, and Barbara Warady at Arts Advocacy Day 2017

I learned that our legislators want to hear primarily from their state constituents, either face to face, or by phone, letter, email, etc. And I learned that the budget presented by the President does not have a huge impact on the decision making processes of Congress. So advocacy isn't a one-day effort, but an ongoing commitment to maintain relationships with our congressional representatives.

What was accomplished on March 21, 2017? The U.S. House of Representatives garnered a record number of 154 signatures in support of federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. This was more bipartisan support than ever. In the U.S. Senate, 40 Senators, almost half the Senate, signed in support. Senator Udall and Representative Dingell promoted the CREATE Act in the Senate and House. This is in support of Artists, Entrepreneurs, and the Creative Economy. As of January 2015, 702,771 businesses are involved in the creation or distribution of the arts, and they employ 2.9 million people, representing 3.9% of all U.S. businesses and 1.9% of all U.S. employees – demonstrating that the arts are a formidable business presence. The arts and culture industry represent 4.3% of the nation's GDP (Gross Domestic Product). This impact is greater than the impact of tourism; and the arts drive tourism. It gets harder to dismiss art as a "frill" when confronted with facts.

So I came home knowing each of us can indeed make a difference. Even when we think no one is listening, our representatives are paying attention to what we say and do. It's our job to make sure they keep hearing from us and knowing that we are paying attention to what they do, and what they fail to do.

Carole Ries is the Executive Vice President of AACT.

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AACT Election Results

Congratulations to those elected to AACT leadership positions

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Executive Vice President

Rick Kerby

Vice President for Festivals

Jim Walker

Treasurer

Michael Fox

Members at Large

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Dennis Gilmore

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Enhance Your Education Program — With Seniors

By Bonnie L Vorenberg

As you have probably heard, there are thousands of Baby Boomers turning 65 every day. And this breed of senior isn't typical. They want to spend their seniorhood growing, exploring new things, and finding their voice. What's better than theatre classes for physical, mental, emotional, and social growth?

I always recommend you include "No memorization" and "No prior experience needed" in marketing and during classes. Theatre has a high fear factor so don't include anything that might intimidate.

Readers theatre is a great focus for the classes. Use it to teach basic skills like character development, vocal skills, and presentation techniques. You can also introduce script-in-hand or "script hiding," the term I use for disguising scripts on stage.

In time, your student actors will be ready to perform. They'll probably tour to mostly-senior audiences in non-theatrical spaces. Have a light focus on most technical elements, except for sound. Take a reliable portable sound system with you because if older people can't hear they won't laugh!

Most Senior Theatres perform short shows tied together on a theme for productions that are no longer than an hour. If the audience contains more frail elders, the shows will need to be shorter.

Even though you'll probably be working with amateur actors, I have discovered that those who have lived a while have seen a lot of characters and been in many situations. Apply their life

Classes are inexpensive and easy to set up. Use your already-established education department to do the mechanics of space, marketing, and registration. Then include seniors' concerns like parking, accessibility, and other details that will attract the older performer. Schedule classes in the daytime and have the coffee pot ready to go! Budget for an instructor who knows how to work with seniors, materials, and other incidentals. If the group will perform, add funds for cast copies and royalties. Use costumes, props, and scenery that you already have.

Begin with Basic Acting classes that are a combination of warm-ups, improvisation, creative drama, and the written word. Sessions that last six to eight weeks fit well into seniors' busy schedules and helps them discover if theatre is their "thing."



Senior Theatre classes are filled with laughter and spontaneity.



Improvisation is a popular part of Senior Theatre classes

The Improvables

experiences to theatre and the performance level will impress you.

Most of all, classes with older students need to be at the right level, at the sweet spot, of difficulty. If they are too easy they will not be challenging and if they are too difficult, they will be overwhelming. The atmosphere in the classroom needs to be serious but fun.

Never forget that for most participants, they aren't there to become a star or compete for the next audition. They want to learn, explore, and find a group where they belong. Provide these elements and you never know where your Senior Theatre program will go!

What classes will do is change people's lives. I remember one of my



Senior Theatre classes help older performers express themselves.

first students, Ivy Margaret Wharton. She had never performed before, but when she took the stage, audiences roared. She said, "I don't know when I've ever been so happy." It all started with classes. ♦

Use this Code: AACT2017 for \$5 off your next order at seniortheatre.com/product/course-plan-for-senior-theatre/ until August 31, 2017.

Bonnie L. Vorenberg is the author of "Teaching Senior Theatre Classes" at seniortheatre.com/product/course-plan-for-senior-theatre/. She is the President of ArtAge's Senior Theatre Resource Center, the largest source of plays, books, materials, and information for older performers at seniortheatre.com, bonniev@seniortheatre.com, or 800-858-4998



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AACT Bylaws and Operations Manual Revised

During the past several years, the AACT Board has transitioned into a board that focuses on direction setting and governance. It has increased the number of professional staff positions and delegated much of the operation of the association to staff and operating volunteers. To facilitate this the Governance Committee has worked on restructuring the Board and revising the bylaws. Last fall a comprehensive revision of the Bylaws was posted on the website for Board and member input. Additional changes were made based on the input received and the proposed Bylaws were adopted by the Board at its Winter meeting in February.

The revised Bylaws are much shorter, focusing on the governance of AACT. This resulted in a need for a more detailed Operations Manual to provide policies and details that might be expected to change more frequently than bylaws. So the Operations Manual was expanded to include items no longer in the bylaws, and policies and procedures that help the organization run smoothly. The new Operations Manual includes policies, procedures, program descriptions, and updated job descriptions.

The new bylaws take effect at the annual Meeting of Members during the National Festival in June. In the future, the membership will elect a greater number of Board Members at Large. The Board will be comprised of the Members at Large and the Regional Representatives. The Board will elect officers from among the Board members. Both Members at Large and Regional Representatives will be eligible for election as officers. However, in this transition year, the officers elected this spring will become Members at Large and serve in the officer positions to which they were elected.

The size of the Board will still be about 30, but flexible, allowing 27-33 Board members. Officer terms will be one year, with the Board able to reelect officers as long as they remain on the Board. Board members, both Members at Large and Regional Representatives, may serve up to eleven consecutive years. The past president will remain on the Board until his/her Board term expires, but will not have specific assignments

as past president. The officers will be President, Executive Vice President, Vice President for Festivals, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Executive Committee will consist of the officers, the chair of the Education Committee, and three other Board members elected by the Board.

As in the past, members will elect the members of the Nominating Committee, but the committee will have seven members instead of five. Members will also elect the members of the Endowment Committee. Both these committees will elect their own chair. The President will appoint most other committee chairs, but the chairs will appoint their committee members. Elections will still be in the spring, but about a month earlier to allow those elected to make meeting travel plans and better prepare for their new positions.

As AACT begins its fourth decade, it is prepared to better meet its mission and the needs of its members. The revised Bylaws and Operations Manual allow staff more flexibility in operating the organization and involving volunteers in operations, while freeing the Board to oversee more objectively, but also to dream, prioritize, and set the direction of the organization.

The revised Bylaws and Operations Manual may be downloaded at aact.org. In the top menu, click on About AACT, Documents, Public AACT Documents. Direct questions to Julie Crawford at Julie@aact.org. ♦

Artie's Advocacy Tip



Speak up for the Arts!

Anyone can advocate for the Arts and have an impact. American for the Arts provides tools, research, and training that help arts professionals and regular citizens alike become seasoned arts advocates. Get involved and start advocating for the arts today. americansforthearts.org/advocate



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Represent the USA at World Children's Festival

AACT is current seeking a USA representative for the 15th World Festival of Children's Theatre. This event will take place in Lingen, Germany from June 22-29, 2018. The Center of Theatre Education Lingen will host this event on behalf of AITA/IATA – the International Amateur Theatre Association – along with the support of the city of Lingen. The 2018 motto will be “Children Move the World.”



Festival organizers invite children's groups with theatre or dance productions as well as productions of movement theatre to apply. 18-20 groups will be accepted for the 2018 festival. The youth performers should be between 8 and 14 years of age. It is a requirement that the group arrive on June 21 or 22 and stay for the entire festival. The production should be between 30 and 60 minutes long. Pieces that do not solely rely on language and are easily understood by an international audience are preferred. There will also be workshops during the festival. Children will stay with host families, and the adults will be accommodated in guest houses.

If your children's theatre company would like to apply to represent the USA at this festival, please contact Tim Jebson, the chair of the AACT International Committee and the Vice President of AITA/IATA. Please contact Tim before October 1, 2017 if your group is interested in applying for this festival.

Tim Jebson
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Thank You to AACTFest 2017 Hosts and Chairs

Regional Festival Hosts and Chairs

Region I

New England Theatre Conference
Warner Theatre, Torrington, CT
Chair: Ed Bassett, Co-Chair: Lori Poulin

Region II

Eastern States Theater Association
Wilmington Drama League, Wilmington, DE
Chair: Jeff DiSabatino

Region III

Association of Region III
Harold and Jean Miner Theatre at Parkland College, Champaign, IL
Chair: Lucinda Lawrence, Co-Chair: Richard Gannon

Region IV

Southeastern Theatre Conference
Downtown Arts Center, Lexington, KY
Chair: Sue Ellen Gerrells

Region V

Region V Association
Central Lakes College Theatre, Brainerd, MN
Chair: Larry Pint, Co-Chair: Bill Muchow

Region VI

Region VI Theatres
Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, LA
Chair: Gerd Wuestermann

Region IX

Idaho Association of Community Theatres
Boise State University Special Events Center, Boise, ID
Chair: Deborah Hertzog, Co-Chair: Jonathan Perry

Region X

Installation Management Command - Europe Region Entertainment
Chair: Dane Winters

State Festival Hosts and Chairs

Region I

Connecticut

Connecticut Community Theatre Association
Warner Theatre, Torrington, CT
Chair: Tori Richnavsky

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Community Theatre Association, Concord, NH
Chair: Chuck Emmons

Region II

Maryland

Maryland Community Theatre Festival Association
Chesapeake College, Wye Mills, MD
Chair: Cynthia Johnson

New York

Theatre Association of New York State
Cayuga Community College, Auburn, NY
Chair: Ann Frame

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Association of Community Theatres
Community Theatre League of Williamsport, Williamsport, PA
Chair: Marsha Amato-Greenspan

Region III

Illinois

Illinois Theatre Association
Community Players of Streator, Engle Lane Theatre, Streator, IL
Chair: Aimee-Lynn Newlan

Indiana

Indiana Community Theatre Association
Kokomo Civic Theatre, Havens Auditorium, Kokomo, IN
Chair: Steve Hughes

Michigan

Community Theatre Association of Michigan
Bay City Players, Bay City, MI
Chair: Joanne Berry, Co-Chair: Joy Butler

Ohio

Ohio Community Theatre Association
Holiday Inn - Cleveland South, Independence, OH
Chair: Dawna R. Kornick, Co-Chair: Wayne E. Kirsch

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Association of Community Theatre
Central Wisconsin Area Community Theatre, Sentry Theater, Stevens Point, WI
Chair: Steve Martin

Region IV

Alabama

Alabama Conference of Theatre
Wetumpka Depot Players, Wetumpka, AL
Chair: Sue Ellen Gerrells

Florida

Florida Theatre Conference
Santa Fe College, Gainesville, FL
Chair: Kristofer Geddie

Georgia

Georgia Theatre Conference
Davidson Fine Arts, Augusta, GA
Chair: Shirley Spencer

Kentucky

Kentucky Theatre Association
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
Chair: Brad Downall

Mississippi

Mississippi Theatre Association
The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS
Chair: Thomas LaFoe

South Carolina

South Carolina Theatre Association
Charleston County School of the Arts, Charleston, SC
Chair: JC Conway

Tennessee

Tennessee Theatre Association
Renaissance Center, Dickson, TN
Chair: Chad McDonald

West Virginia

West Virginia Theatre Association
West Virginia Wesleyan, Buckhannon, WV
Chair: Vickie Trickett

Region V

Iowa

Iowa Community Theatre Association
Marshalltown Community Theatre, Martha Ellen Tye Playhouse,
Marshalltown, IA
Chair: Rick Gooding

Minnesota

Minnesota Association of Community Theatres
Marshall Area Stage Company, Schwan Community Center for the
Performing Arts, Marshall, MN
Chair: Bob Schwoch, Co-Chair: Maureen Keimig

Nebraska

Nebraska Association of Community Theatres
Minden Opera House, Minden, NE
Chair: Christine Cottam

Region VI

Arkansas

Arkansas Community Theater Association
The Studio Theater, Little Rock, AR
Chair: Shann Nobles, CoChair: Justin Pike

New Mexico

Theatre New Mexico, Alm d'Arte Charter High, Las Cruces, NM
Chair: Larry Fisher

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Community Theatre Association
Stagecoach Community Theatre (Perry) and Town & Gown (Stillwater),
Stillwater, OK
Chair: Debbie Sutton

Texas

Texas Nonprofit Theatres, Inc.
Medical Center of Lewisville Grand Theatre, Lewisville, TX
Chair: Linda M. Lee

Region VII

Colorado

Colorado Community Theatre Coalition
Steamplant Event Center, Salida CO
Chair: John Davis

Region IX

Idaho

Idaho Association of Community Theatres
Boise State University Special Events Center, Boise, ID
Chair: Deborah Hertzog, Co-Chair: Jonathan Perry

Oregon

Oregon Community Theatre Alliance
Enlightened Theatrics, Salem's Historic Grand Theatre, Salem OR
Chair: Carolyn McCloskey

Washington

Washington State Community Theatre Association
Tacoma Musical Playhouse, Tacoma, WA
Chair: Jon Douglas Rake

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- Los Angeles Times

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Cran Dodds



AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford and Mike Barrow, Executive Director of Denton Community Theatre in Denton, TX, share thoughts during the Texas Nonprofit Theatre Festival March 17, 2017 in Lewisville, Texas.

Cran Dodds



Kristi Quinn, Texas AACTFest adjudicator, and Wanda Schenk, AACT Festival Commissioner, enjoy a giddy moment at the Texas Nonprofit Theatre Festival in Lewisville, Texas March 18, 2017.

Cran Dodds



Patty McCormick, Lago Vista Players Board Member, AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds, and Leonard McCormick, Lago Vista Players volunteer, visit on the stage of Lago Vista Players in Lago Vista, Texas, March 23, 2017.

Ron Ziegler



Adjudicator and AACT President Murray Chase makes a point during panel adjudication of one of the shows at the Region IX AACTFest, and is joined by fellow adjudicators Jim Sobre and Kathy Pingel. The festival took place March 31-April 1, 2017 in Boise, Idaho.

Julie Crawford



Steve Willis visits with AACT Board Member Jim Walker at the AACT Region II Festival, ESTAFest 2017, in Wilmington, Delaware on April 7, 2017.

Julie Crawford



Joan Luther with the Theatre Association of New York State and Bob Frame, AACT Festival Commissioner, exchange ideas at AACT Region II ESTAFest 2017 in Wilmington, Delaware on April 7, 2017.



AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford shares the joy of attending a festival with Eastern States Theatre Association President Marsha Amato-Greenspan at the AACT Region II Festival, ESTAFest 2017, in Wilmington, Delaware on April 8, 2017

Jenny Parkhurst, Executive Director of Corn Stock Theatre in Peoria, Illinois, takes a break from her many tasks to visit with AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds on April 25, 2017. Behind Jenny is a painting of the Corn Stock Theatre outdoor theatre tent.



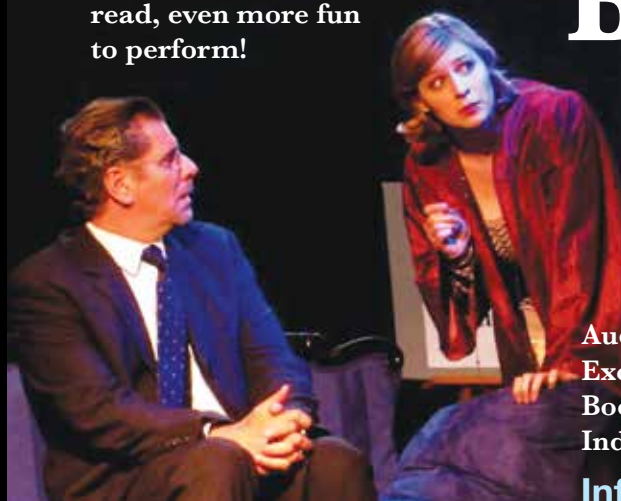
AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds had a delightful visit with Nicki Haschke, Executive Director of the Peoria Players, in Peoria, Illinois on April 25, 2017.



Bruce Parrish, Historian for Community Players in Bloomington, Illinois and AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds share a wonderful tour of the fantastic Community Players facility, April 25, 2017.

continued on the next page ▶

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Cran Dodds

Jan Hooten, Board Member of Theatre 7 in Decatur, Illinois, took AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds on an extensive tour of the fabulous facility of Theatre 7, April 26, 2017.



Cran Dodds

Carl Seben, volunteer for Monticello Theatre Association in Monticello, Illinois and AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds spent a productive afternoon discussing volunteer recruitment, fundraising, and theatre management on April 26, 2017.

Danville Light Opera Board President Heather Miyagi, and Danville Light Opera Board Members Gary Lickfett, Andrew Peters, Paul Strain, and Ron McDaniel met with AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds in Danville, Illinois on April 27, 2017.



Cran Dodds



Julie Crawford

AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford; John Viars, Des Moines Community Playhouse Executive Director, AACT Past President, and Region V adjudicator; Mary Britt, Ocala Civic Theatre Executive Director, AACT Past President, and Region V adjudicator; and Patrick Spradlin, Brainerd Community Theatre Director at Central Lake College and Region V Festival host commemorate the AACT Region V AACTFest in Brainerd, Minnesota on April 28, 2017



Cran Dodds

Frances Dodds and AACT Member Engagement Director Cranston Dodds celebrate the opening of The Carpetbagger's Children with Henderson County Performing Arts Center Director David Hill in Athens, Texas, April 28, 2017.



Robert Picklesimer, Playwright and Director of the Creative Dramatics Workshop in Homer, Illinois, discusses his new musical with AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds during a visit on April 28, 2017.

Kelly Knowlin, Executive Director of Champaign Urbane Theatre Company, and Ted Knowlin visit with AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds during the AACTFest Region III festival in Champaign, Illinois on April 28, 2017.

continued on the next page ►



Nancy Eppert, Region III Festival adjudicator and AACT Region V Representative, has an enlightening discussion with James Craig, Kokomo Civic Theatre volunteer, at the AACT Region III AACTFest in Champaign, Illinois April 28, 2017.



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Jean Beckman

Patrick Spradlin, Brainerd Community Theatre Director at Central Lake College and Region V AACTFest host and AACT Board Member Jim Walker at AACT Region V AACTFest in Brainerd, Minnesota on April 29, 2017

Michael D. Formica, Installation Management Command – Europe Region Entertainment Director, receives AACT's Special Recognition Award from AACT Festivals Coordinator Ron Ziegler at the Topper Awards, Region X's annual theatre celebration. The event was held in Wiesbaden, Germany on April 29, 2017.



Ron Ziegler

Ansbach Terrace Playhouse Director Vicki Hanrahan and AACT Region X Representative Dane Winters keep the action moving at the Installation Management Command – Europe Region Topper Awards, April 29, 2017 in Wiesbaden, Germany.



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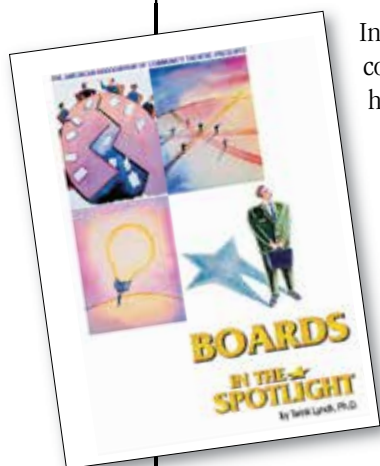
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American Alliance for Theatre and Education

30th National Convention

New Orleans, Louisiana
August 2 - 6, 2017

Divisions, Collisions, Coalitions

AATE's 30th annual conference will be held in the romantic, historic, and vibrant New Orleans, Louisiana from August 2-6, 2017. In a city known for its food, culture, music, and spirits, conference attendees will escape into deep explorations and decadent celebrations. In a city known for being a cultural melting pot, the convention will explore where our field divides, where those divisions have the serendipity to collide, and how those collisions can make coalitions for stronger theatre and education.

The convention will feature keynotes from playwright and interdisciplinary artist Lisa D'Amour, who is half of the OBIE-Award winning performance duo PearlDamour, and Tony award winning stage, film, and screen actor Michael Cerveris.

aate.memberclicks.net

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David C. Horn Prize

Yale Drama Series
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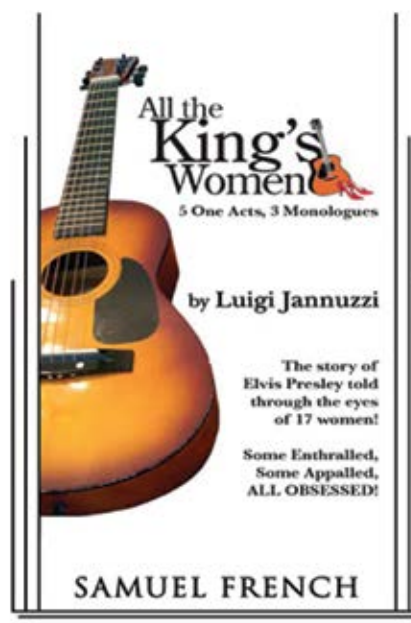
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Careers in Theatre

Highlighting Professional Staff Changes in Theatre

Racine, Wisconsin - **Racine Theatre Guild** is happy to welcome **Joycelyn Fish** as their new Director of Marketing and Development. Joycelyn has a BS in Organizational Communication from Viterbo University and brings various experiences in nonprofits to her position. She has always had a passion for theatre, working at the Viterbo Fine Arts Center, and volunteering with the Reedsburg Children's Summer Theatre, UW-Baraboo Theatre Department, and In Tandem Theatre. "I am thrilled to be working in a field I love everyday."

Little Rock, Arkansas - **The Weekend Theater** is pleased to announce **Andrea McDaniel** as its new Executive Director. Ms. McDaniel, who has served as Assistant to the Executive Director for the past year, has a BA in Theatre from Henderson State University with an emphasis in theatre administration and directing. McDaniel has extensive experience with all technical and non-technical aspects of theatre and has been involved with several theatres around central Arkansas, including the Arkadelphia Little Theater and Red Door Studios. "The Weekend Theater is a wonderful organization, with a long history of producing high-quality, thought-provoking theater. I can't wait to get started!" says McDaniel. Congratulations Andrea!

Peoria, Illinois - **Corn Stock Theatre** is pleased to announce the recent appointment of **Jennifer Burnett Parkhurst** as Theatre Manager. Parkhurst has had a long association with the Theatre since 1978 as a performer, choreographer, director, volunteer, and founder of the *Corn Stock For Kids* Youth Program in 1997. Employed as the organization's Marketing Director since 2012, Parkhurst is "thrilled to be given the opportunity to keep Corn Stock Theatre moving forward and remain one of the most unique theatre venues in the area. I'm excited to bring innovative programming and new ideas, while honoring and preserving the Theatre's 64-year history in the Peoria community." Producing over twelve shows and special events annually, Corn Stock offers family-friendly summer outdoor Tent shows, cutting edge Winter Playhouse shows, and theatre education classes and shows for area youth.

Omaha, Nebraska - Omahan **Katie Broman** has been named executive director of **Omaha Community Playhouse** (OCP), one of the nation's largest community theatres currently in its 92nd season. Broman was previously director of marketing and public relations at OCP from 2010 to 2015, and most recently was director of marketing and public relations at Opera Omaha. She holds a BS in journalism and a MPA in nonprofit management. In her new role, Broman plans to enhance theatre

education opportunities for children, increase community collaborations, and focus on OCP's national presence. Omaha Community Playhouse produces 10 productions each year and a series of alternative programming and special events. ♦

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Workers Compensation – Who Else Is an Employee?

by Ken Roberts



A few months back, I attempted to shed some light on what constitutes an employee for all-volunteer, nonprofit theatres in regards to workers compensation insurance. Since then, I have had conversations with several theatres who still don't believe they have any employees, yet they regularly execute contracts with individuals who direct productions or teach various theatre classes for a small stipend or fee. Even though these directors and teachers do not receive a steady paycheck, and are technically *subcontractors* who may only receive a 1099 from the theatre, workers compensation law mandates that they are employees who must be insured for any potential injuries they sustain.

Any amount of monetary exchange, no matter how small, triggers the workers compensation requirement in every state but Texas.

The initial confusion seems to revolve around what is considered to be compensation. As I mentioned in the March/April article, any amount of monetary exchange, no matter how small, triggers the workers compensation requirement in every state but Texas. In fact, if a theatre doesn't pay one penny for those subcontractors' services, but only provides them with temporary housing, that housing is considered to be compensation in most states. The amount that should be considered to be "payroll" varies by state, and it is vital not to overlook this benefit as compensation.

There have been documented cases recently where state insurance commissions have discovered that various nonprofit organizations were not purchasing the required workers compensation insurance for their non-employee subcontractors, and those commissions were not only going back two years to collect premiums that should have been paid, but they were also tacking on penalties that exceeded the premiums in some cases. We have all heard the old adage that ignorance of the law is no excuse, and that includes workers compensation law. This is especially true in monopolistic states, where the only avenue for workers compensation insurance is through the state fund. The states of North Dakota, Ohio, Washington, and Wyoming do not allow competition for workers compensation insurance, so compliance is tightly regulated, and the states look for ways to boost revenue for their workers compensation funds.

The bottom line here is that we should never assume that just because we don't pay someone regularly, or very much, or at all, that we are not required to provide them with workers compensation insurance. There are too many different components, variables and jurisdictions that figure into the process of defining compensation, and as such, there are many different ways to define an employee. As a general rule – when in doubt, ask a licensed professional broker or agent for guidance.



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AACT Web Power

"Tips of the Month" - Helpful ideas on a variety of theatre topics, from acting and directing to lighting and sound, from set design and construction to marketing and governance. Recent tips include creating realistic-looking period costumes, lighting to underscore an "aha" moment, and marketing to different target-group audiences. Updated the first of each month at: aact.org/tips

Watch for Web Power in every issue of *Spotlight*—and learn how to get the most from the AACT website.

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Kids Say the Darndest Things Based on the book by

Art Linkletter. Book and lyrics by Robert Johanson.

Music and lyrics and orchestration by Albert Evans.

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Kelsey Celek, Head of Education/Director of Student Theatre
Quincy Community Theatre, Quincy, Illinois

The Marketing & Development Track at the AACT TEAM Conference was simply Amazing! Our awesome facilitator, Nancy Brozek, brought a wealth of knowledge to all the wonderful attendees. If you are looking to take your theatre to another level, attend TEAM. You will not be disappointed!

Mary A. Santana, Executive Director
The Miracle Center, Chicago, Illinois

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Where's the Ritalin?

by Twink Lynch

AACT cyberspace was active recently with questions and observations on the role of a community theatre's executive committee. The experience of the managing directors participating in the "conversation" varied from a do-all-important-things executive committee to those that functioned only as agenda developers and CEO evaluation committees. There was a sense that executive committees need careful watching.

And indeed they do. Before we ever so blithely write an executive committee into our bylaws (often because we are copying someone else's bylaws), we should first determine why we need such a committee. It is not required by law. So we should ask: Is our Board too large (25 or more, according to some authorities) to function without a smaller group empowered to act on behalf of the whole Board in certain circumstances? Is ours a state, regional, or national Board with members scattered far and wide and thus unable to meet frequently enough to govern the organization effectively? Is there a major organizational change going on that requires such frequent Board meetings that all its members cannot consistently attend? (A follow-up question might be this: Why aren't some of the tasks being delegated to other committees?)

"When the executive committee is allowed to usurp the role of the full Board, those Board Members usually begin to feel like second class Board Members — even if they do not say so."

The above are certainly valid reasons for creating an executive committee to handle specified matters between regular Board meetings — but those "specified matters" should be spelled out in the bylaws; e.g., "The executive committee is empowered to act under the following circumstances: (then specify them)." We do need to know that *executive committees are usually not permitted to:*

1. amend the articles of incorporation or the bylaws,
2. dissolve the corporation,
3. dismiss or elect new Board Members or officers,
4. hire or fire the chief staff person,
5. enter into major contracts or sue another entity,
6. change a Board-approved budget or reverse other previous Board decisions,
7. adopt or eliminate major programs.

Board authority Arthur C. Frantzreb states that the original role of an executive committee was designed to serve in the "absence of the presence of the Board" and for emergency decisions which must be approved by the full Board at its next meeting. He notes, however, "In the recent history of the independent sector, executive committees have become dominant in all, repeat all, Board considerations and actions." He goes on to say, "The executive committee was never intended to replace, supplant, or denigrate the full Board operation. The entire Board of trustees is responsible under state law for all actions. No matter should be brought to the executive committee for action...except for emergencies." (from *Not on This Board You Don't* by Arthur C. Frantzreb, 1997).

Andrew Swanson, a national consultant on Boardmanship, agrees. "When the executive committee is allowed to usurp the role of the full Board, those Board Members usually begin to feel like second class Board Members — even if they do not say so. Another reason this is bad practice is that the full Board is still responsible — legally as well as morally — for *every* decision made by the executive committee. The Board of Directors may delegate its workload but never its responsibilities." (from *Building a Better Board* by Andrew Swanson, 1992).

Richard Chait, *et al.*, also caution against "hyperactive" executive committees, believing the two-tier system "virtually ensures that the Board, in toto, will not operate as an effective team." They believe that the most constructive roles an executive committee can play are "To oversee goal setting and agenda development (i.e., to be a steering committee) and to serve as a preliminary sounding board for the CEO and the Board chair." (from *Improving the Performance of Governing Boards* by Richard Chait, Thomas Holland, and Barbara Taylor, 1996). Assuming we want an executive committee, who should serve on it? The officers, including a past president, of course. Many Boards also include at least some of the chairs of standing committees and/or 1 to 2 members elected at large by the whole Board. The practice of having members-at-large elected by the full Board seems to allay fears of a "clique running the Board" and develops trust in the decisions and/or recommendations of the executive committee.

Terms of service on the executive committee should coincide with the terms of the Board Member's elected office. For officers and chairs of standing committees, these are often one-year terms with the possibility of being re-elected or re-appointed to a second or, more rarely, third term. For Board Members elected

at large, it may be wise to limit their terms to one year, so that new blood can flow into the executive committee in a predictable way.

How often should an executive committee meet? If it is truly an emergency-related committee, one would hope — NEVER! In any case, it would only meet when a bona fide emergency arises. If an executive committee is used to develop the agenda or to serve as a sounding board, it would meet before every regular Board meeting. If special matters are referred to the executive committee by the whole Board for follow-up, it should meet as often as needed to carry out that mandate. Some Boards do refer supervision and evaluation of the chief staff person or final

An executive committee, when properly constituted and constrained, can help a Board in several ways.

action on construction bids or other contracts to the executive committee. Whatever its charge, all executive committee actions should be ratified by the full Board at its next meeting. This caveat should be clearly stated in your theatre's bylaws.

The bottom line? An executive committee, when properly constituted and constrained, can help a Board in several ways. The danger is in the tendency of executive committees to become a *de facto* Board, which usually results in low morale for the rest of the Board Members and/or a resulting drop in attendance at Board meetings (Why do we need to be there? All we're doing is rubber stamping their decisions.) At the very least, there will likely develop a "them vs. us" tension among Board Members, and at meetings this tension will interfere with good discussion and effective decision-making, not to mention the possibility of outright conflict.

When you think about it, why would we need the rest of the Board Members if the executive committee is doing all the work, especially when those extra Board Members are equally liable for everything the executive committee decides, whether they've had any input or not. I personally wouldn't serve on such a Board. Who needs all that liability without any of the fun?

Reprinted from Boards in the Spotlight, page 85

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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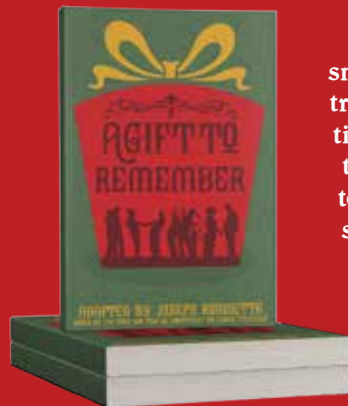
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