

spotlight

November/December 2018 \$5.00

american association of community theatre

AACT NewPlayFest



Social Media Strategies
TEAM Conference 2018

AACTFest 2019
Solo Performances

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Carole Ries
AACT President

What's Your Story?

AACT Region I Representative Beverley "Bevie" Lord recently said to me, "I've heard so many great stories about community theatres and I'm afraid that those stories will be lost if someone doesn't collect them." Bevie has served as Region I Rep for over six years, was inducted as a Fellow in 2015, and specializes in management and governance. She suggested it would be great to create a compilation of those stories and has offered to collect them. Who better than AACT to be a repository for such stories? I encourage you to share your stories with us. If you share your story, please give lots of details - the name of your theatre and the town, what year (if you know it) the story took place, and any other fun details. Bevie suggested a few anecdotes to get us started thinking.

In Region I, Bevie tells me the Weston Friendly Society in Weston, Massachusetts, founded in 1885 and the second oldest community theatre in the states, started out with dressing rooms in the police jail cells in the basement of its police station. Another anecdote she has heard tells of the St. Charles Theatre, one of the oldest and most storied vaudeville theatres in New Orleans. After burning to the ground twice, it was rebuilt in all its new-Renaissance glory in 1902 but had no air conditioning. So the owners drilled holes in the floor under the seats. In the basement, performing seals were held in cold water tanks until their act was ready to perform. So with great ingenuity, the owners placed fans near the tanks to push the cool air upward to cool the audience of nearly 4,000 people.

I have a story to share as well. Beginning in 1964, I worked at Memphis Little Theatre (later Theatre Memphis) that was housed in a dry swimming pool in an unfinished palatial home. The "Pink Palace" was built by Clarence Saunders, the father of self-service grocery shopping and founder of Piggly Wiggly. His 36,500 square-foot house was faced with pink Georgia marble, thus its name. In 1923 he lost a battle on the New York Stock Exchange and was forced to declare bankruptcy. The unfinished mansion was donated to the City of Memphis and turned into a museum. Memphis Little Theatre was given the unfinished pool in the basement in the early thirties and occupied it until 1975. It was perfect for raked audience seating. Years later, like so many other theatres, Theatre Memphis was located right next to train tracks. During one musical review, the cast inserted an extra song each night as the train passed, calling it the "Theatre Memphis Choo Choo."

So, if you've got a great story about your theatre, send it to Beverley Lord, Region I Rep, at Beverley.lord@comcast.net or mail to the AACT office at 1300 Gendy Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76107-4036, Attn: Beverley Lord.

Carole



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Display the AACT logo proudly on your theatre's printed materials, website, and social media

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Clare McDonald (Alana) and Malakhai Schnell (Johnny) in the AACT NewPlayFest world premiere production of *Treehouse* by Joe Musso at Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove, Oregon
Photo by Emily Bly

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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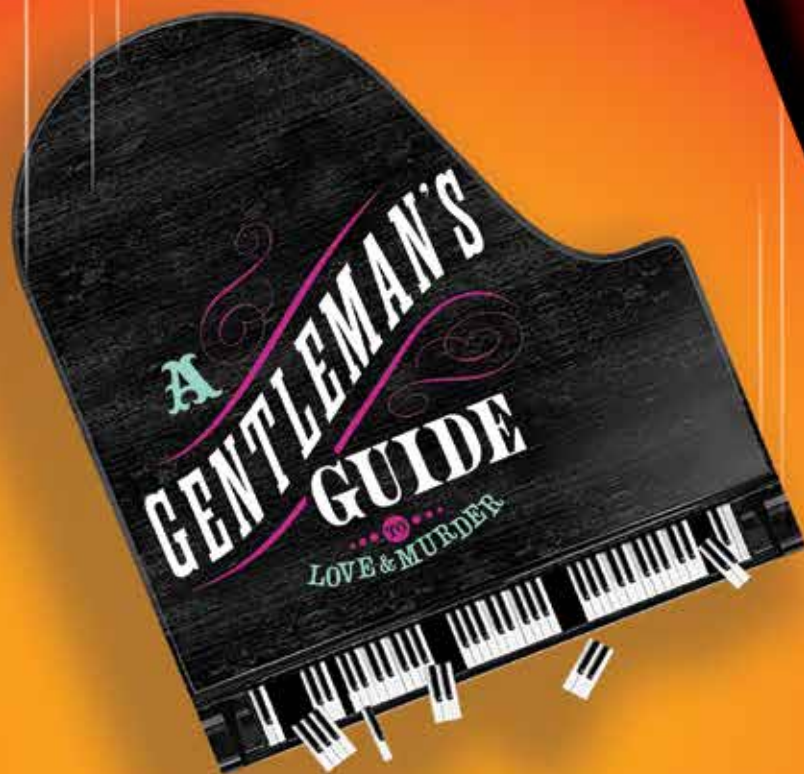
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Jamie Ulmer
Beatrice, NE (2019)

Region Representatives

- I Beverley Lord
Foxborough, MA (2019)
- II Joan Luther
Naples, NY (2021)
- III Steve Hughes
Kokomo, IN (2019)
- IV Lynn Nelson
Tupelo, MS (2019)
- V Nancy Eppert
Independence, MO (2019)
- VI Sally Barnes
Broken Arrow, OK (2019)
- VII Donna Fisher
Casper, WY (2019)
- VIII Dennis Gilmore
Indio, CA (2020)
- IX Jon Douglas Rake
Tacoma, WA (2019)
- X Dane Winters
Germany (US Army) (2019)

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences**AACT Winter Meetings**

Strategic Planning Retreat
February 21, 2019
Salt Lake City, Utah

Board Meetings

February 22 – 24, 2019
Salt Lake City, Utah

The AACT Board, Committees, and Task Forces will meet in Salt Lake City, Utah, for the AACT Winter Meetings 2019. Meetings will be held at the Hale Centre Theatre.

Meetings are open. Contact the AACT office or visit aact.org/calendar for details.

Hotel and Travel discounts available. Information at aact.org/calendar

*Hilton Garden Inn - Reserve by Feb 02, 2019
277 West Sego Lily Drive, Sandy, Utah
Call for Reservations: 801-352-9400*

AACT Staff

Quiana Clark-Roland, Executive Director
Geoff Leonard-Robinson, Membership Director
David Cockerell, Marketing/Communications Director
Ron Ziegler, Festivals Coordinator
Karen Matheny, Office Support Manager

Winston Daniels, Office/Festivals Assistant
Jill Patchin, Corporate Partners Manager
Darlene DeLorenzo, Vendor Services Coordinator
Susan Austin, AACT NewPlayFest Coordinator
Stephen Peithman, Webmaster

Spotlight

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

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

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grice@kinggroup.us
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Join AACT on Lincoln Square, the Heart of Gettysburg!

AACTFest 2019 National Festival
June 18 – 22, 2019
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
aact.org/19



AACTFest 2019 National Festival in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, will be the culmination of a two-year cycle of festivals across the country. The festival will include twelve community theatre productions, theatre management and youth leadership conferences, a youth festival, educational workshops, top vendor displays, design and monologue competitions, social events, sightseeing and

networking opportunities, all ending with a festival awards presentation.

The AACTFest 2019 festival cycle is underway. State festivals are scheduled. Keep up with theatre companies advancing from their state to regional festivals at aact.org/19 and here in *Spotlight* (see Moving On, page 11).

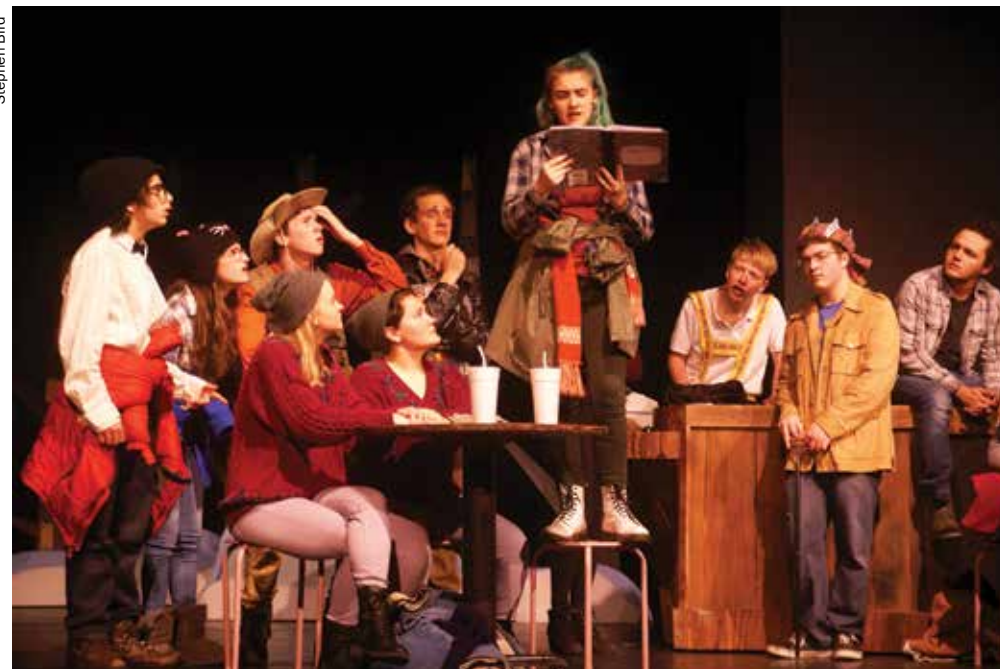
Call for AACTFest 2019 Workshops

The AACT Workshops Committee is searching for workshop presenters to share their expertise at AACTFest 2019. Most workshops will be in the traditional 75-minute format. Proposals need to be received by November 15, 2018. Complete and submit the RFP (Request for Proposals) online: aact.org/aactfest-2019-workshop-rfp. Questions: Email Chris Serface at workshops@aact.org.



Renee Moevy

AACT workshops provide a wide variety of educational opportunities



Stephen Bird

AACT YouthFest 2019, the 2nd Annual National Youth Theatre Festival, will be in conjunction with AACTFest 2019. AACT is looking for youth theatre companies interested in participating. AACT YouthFest is not a competition, but rather a celebration of Youth Theatre! Performances will be adjudicated and there will be opportunities for individual and group performance awards. Interested? Email AACT YouthFest 2019 Chair, Chad-Alan Carr at Chad@GettysburgCommunityTheatre.org

Clark Youth Theatre from Tulsa Oklahoma presented Snow Angel at AACT YouthFest 2017

The **AACT Design Competition** will be held during AACTFest 2019. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to showcase your creativity and possibly take home a cash award. In cooperation with the United States Institute of Theatre Technology (USITT), an AACT Platinum Level Corporate Partner, AACT will award a \$300 prize to the design chosen as Outstanding Overall Design. The judges may also decide to award prizes of \$100 for Outstanding Design in each of the seven design categories. Plan now to enter. Go to aact.org/design19 to view design categories, complete guidelines, and display suggestions. The online entry forms are available starting November 1, 2018. Entry forms must be submitted by June 12, 2019.



Stephen Bird

Awards and cash prizes are presented to winners in the AACT Design Competition

David Cockerell



Volunteer Opportunities

While there, AACT will be working with the conference facilities, as well as connecting to the Gettysburg CVB and Chamber of Commerce, to make this the best festival experience for you. However, we rely heavily on the expertise, time, and commitment of volunteers to make that happen. AACT is looking for volunteers to help make AACTFest 2019 a success. Whether it is just for a few hours or a full-time commitment, we are looking for greeters, booth sitters, stuffers, merchandise handlers, and smiling faces to make the festival magic happen! So, if you are interested and are able to dedicate a few hours to volunteer, please contact Quiana@aact.org.

Join the fun as an AACT volunteer during AACTFest 2019!

More AACTFest on next page ►

Join AACTFest 2019 at the Majestic, "the grandest small-town theater in America!" Visit destinationgettysburg.com to learn more about everything Gettysburg has to offer.

Register Now at aact.org/19 and save:

Early Bird Rates good through March 1, 2019:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Member | \$ 275.00 |
| Non-Member | \$ 355.00 |
| Adjudication Training - Intro Course | \$ 30.00 |
| Adjudication Training - Seminar | \$ 135.00 |
| Battlefield Bus Tour | \$ 30.00 |
| Monologue Contest Entry Fee | \$ 20.00 |
| AACT Youth Discount (18 and Younger) | \$ -75.00 |
| Competing/Advancing Company Member | \$ -5.00 |

Single tickets to performance blocks and daily tickets will be available in Spring 2019.

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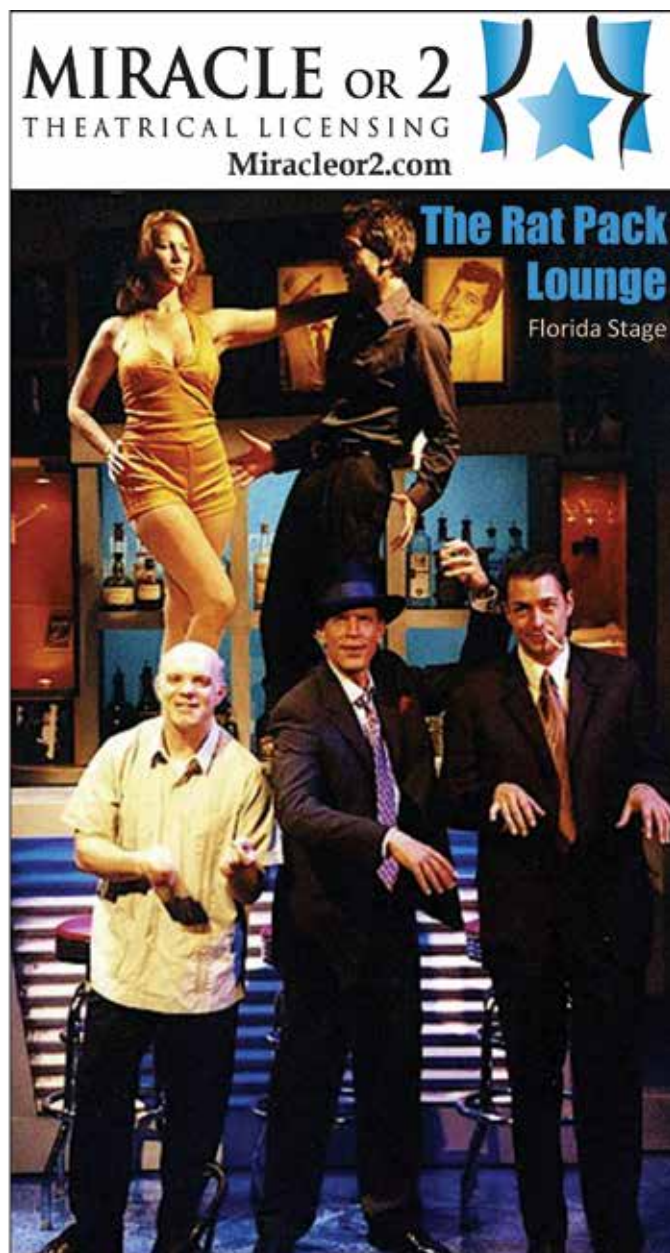
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Support AACT Endowment Fund

Call for AACTFest 2019 Silent Auction Items

Rick Kerby
Executive Vice President
Endowment Committee Chair

We have all heard the term “retail therapy.” The idea that buying something pretty when we feel down can make us feel better. Alternatively, I just read that research has identified a link between making a donation to charity and increased activity in the area of the brain that registers pleasure. So, really as a service to our membership, here is your chance for both! Combine shopping with the act of giving by donating an item for the Endowment Auction!



Call for auction items

The AACT Endowment Fund was created specifically to help companies representing their regions pay some of their travel expenses to the national festival, or to subsequent international festivals. As you know, transporting a production – its cast, crew, sets, and costumes – to a festival site can be expensive.

The Endowment Committee has a dream. This dream includes a festival where the finest companies from around the country can participate without the worry of this financial responsibility. We need your help!



Jim Walker participates in "retail therapy" during the AACTFest 2017 Silent Auction

One of the ways we fund our dream is with a silent auction. This fundraising event will take place before and during AACTFest 2019. The Endowment Committee is requesting items that have significant value, wide appeal, are unique, easily transportable, and are theatrically themed. A tall order, but here are some suggestions that have worked in the past.

Travel packages – AACT is lucky to have representation from around the country. Show off where you live by asking your local theatres to

donate tickets, stays at hotels or Bed and Breakfasts, meals at local restaurants. Think of it as a showcase for your hometown.

Signed memorabilia – Remember that hometown actor who got his/her start on YOUR stage? Contact them to see if they will support the next generation of stars by donating a signed program, photo, or poster. Know a famous playwright? Ask if they will donate a signed copy of their script.

Services – AACT's most respected resource is knowledge. Share yours. Are you a fantastic grant writer? Donate your service. Do you have experience in board development? Lead a retreat. Consider yourself an expert director, choreographer, music director, vocal coach, or playwright? Donate your time or offer yourself as a mentor.

Call on your contacts – Have a favorite set, drop, or costume rental company? See if they would be willing to donate as an opportunity to bring awareness of their services to members of AACT.

Think outside the box – What items would appeal to you enough to take the time and money to participate in an auction? Now go find that item! The current plan is to have some, if not all, of the items for bid online so that all of our membership can participate. In our technical world, the only limit is our imagination.

For instructions, details, and deadlines, visit aact.org/silent-auction. ♦

Moving On

Theatres recently selected to represent their States/Regions in the AACTFest 2019 cycle

State winners moving on to their regional festival are shown below. Some states qualify to send two shows to their regional festival. Winners of the regional festivals will move on to the national festival in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, June 18-22, 2019.

Productions advancing to the AACTFest 2019 national festival are in bold type.

See all theatres representing states and regions in the AACTFest 2019 cycle at aact.org/moving-2019.

| Region | Theatre | From | Production | Playwright |
|--------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| I | The ActorSingers | Nashua, NH | <i>21 Chump Street</i> | Lin-Manuel Miranda |
| I | The Lexington Players | Arlington, MA | <i>Who Will Sing For Lena?</i> | Janice L. Lidell |
| I | Phoenix Stage Company | Oakville, CT | <i>One Night with Fanny Brice</i> | Chip Deffaa |
| I | Windham Actors Guild | Windham, NH | <i>The Actor's Nightmare</i> | Christopher Durang |
| III | Actors Collaborative Toledo | Maumee, OH | <i>A Life</i> | Adam Bock |
| III | Mariemont Players | Cincinnati, OH | <i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> | Mark Brown |
| IV | Actors' Warehouse | Gainesville, FL | <i>Mud</i> | Maria Irene Fornés |
| X | Stuttgart Theatre Center | Stuttgart, Germany | <i>Kaleidoscope</i> | Ray Bradbury |

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AACT Adjudication Training

Kathy Pingel

The purpose of AACT adjudication is threefold: to accurately reflect to the performing company what has been successfully achieved, to outline reasonable steps that might be taken to enhance interpretation of the story and, finally, to select which of the companies will receive awards. At its best, adjudication educates and illuminates.

AACT Adjudication Committee

In 2016, a national committee headed by Morrie Enders, Lincoln (NE) Community Playhouse Executive Director, was convened to explore many facets of AACT adjudication including: what makes for a positive adjudication, who is best equipped to adjudicate, and how best to teach it? One conclusion was there needed to be a standardized curriculum. In 2017, I was charged with writing curriculum for the National Festival's Adjudication Seminar, having taught it in 2015 and 2017. The curriculum was first written and then sent out for peer review by eight former national adjudicators and others. Revisions were made and the AACT board approved the final product in 2018.

The AACT Adjudication Seminar is rigorous. It takes forty hours to complete but offers participants a rich overview and practical experience with feedback. The aim is not to create "cookie cutter" adjudicators but to help develop individual styles that still suit the needs of a successful festival. To that end, there are several different methods of taking notes, approaches to organization, ways in which to engage a company to gain trust, and philosophies that aim our sights on uplifting the efforts of every contributing company without sugar-coating the truth.

The aim is not to create "cookie cutter" adjudicators but to help develop individual styles

And even though the curriculum was gathered by one person, the text comes from every corner of AACT. In a document called "Theatre Truths," there is a list of observations gleaned from six years of national adjudication including: "Strong lighting design is a dance between light and shadow." (Benny Sato-Ambush, AACTFest 2017 adjudicator), "Don't make chaos confusing." (Morrie Enders, AACTFest 2009, 2017 adjudicator), and "Finish the moment." (John Viars, AACTFest 2001, 2015 adjudicator). There is a preparation worksheet, inspired by a suggestion from theatre consultant Karen Gilmore, to help frame the adjudicator's impressions while reading plays. Prior seminars by Ron Cameron-Lewis (AACTFest 1995 adjudicator) and Annette Procnier (AACTFest 1997, 2003, 2011 adjudicator) are also referenced. And previous seminar participants' discussions have resulted in a clear determination of what makes for a successful adjudication. The curriculum is rooted in our current perceptions, but designed to evolve.

Consider joining us for the 2019 AACT Adjudication Seminar in Gettysburg if you have interest in becoming an adjudicator, if you want to expand your appreciation of theatre, or if you want to expand your vocabulary as a director. The class size is limited to allow for discussion and practice adjudications, so sign up early! ♦

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------|
| Adjudication Training Intro Course | 2 hours | \$30 |
| Adjudication Training Seminar | 40 hours | \$135 |

Kathy Pingel is an AACT fellow and has adjudicated state, regional, national, and international festivals. She works as a guest director in Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Ansbach, Germany. She will also be serving as dramaturge for AACT NewPlayFest 2020.

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TEAM Work, TEAM Fun!

Geoff Leonard-Robinson
Membership Director

On the evening of August 17, 56 theatre professionals and enthusiasts came together at the Hale Centre Theatre in Salt Lake City, Utah, for TEAM Conference 2018. The four-track 3-day intensive educational program attracted participants from 14 states including Alaska, Massachusetts, Florida, and Hawaii.

The conference began with a catered dinner, providing participants, facilitators, and hosts the opportunity to relax, make introductions, renew friendships, and learn more about new friends. The first conference session began as soon as dessert ended, with each of the tracks gathering in its own designated conference room. But, the Hale Centre Theatre (HCT) is no place to just sit in a room—there's excitement, inspiration, and learning around every corner.

In addition to serving as local host, Michael Fox, HCT's Treasurer and Chief Operations Officer (and AACT's Treasurer), provided personalized tours of the HCT facility for each track. While including HCT's impressive 900-seat Centre Stage and 450-seat Jewel Box Stage, each track's tour also focused on the specific operational area of interest to the group.

HCT also graciously provided tickets for all TEAM participants to attend one of their currently running productions: *Disney's Newsies* in the Centre Stage theatre or *Disney's My Son Pinocchio* on the Jewel Box Stage. Both productions exhibited the highest of production values and received rave reviews.

Each track was facilitated by professionals with expertise in its focus area: Artistic Vision – Morrie Enders, Development/Marketing – Kristi Quinn, Education – Jennifer Hamilton, and Technical – Rob Kinmont and Kacey Udy. While the multiple sessions included extensive roundtable discussions and Q&A opportunities, there were also some exciting supplemental



Geoff Leonard-Robinson

Participants in the Artistic Direction Vision Track marveled at the Hale Centre Theatre Centre Stage as Michael Fox, HCT Chief Operations Officer, described all of the technological features of the space

opportunities. Those included a special “field trip” to the Utah Children's Theatre (including an abridged performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*) for the Education track, and unique opportunities to see some of the latest technology and stagecraft

continued on page 14 ►



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Michael Fox provided opportunities for all TEAM track participants to view the intricate details of the set design for the production of Disney's My Son Pinocchio on HCT's Jewel Box Stage

techniques for the Technical track with "behind the scenes" sessions led by HCT's technical staff.

Participants also had the pleasure of meeting Robin Pomatto (Coordinator of Concert and Foreign Licensing) of the Rodgers & Hammerstein (R&H) Library. Robin engaged with the collective group, as well as with each track individually, answering questions regarding royalties and securing production rights and shared news regarding R&H and Tams-Witmark moving under the Concord Music umbrella. Each registrant also received a special gift, compliments of R&H.

At the conclusion of the conference on August 19, many participants expressed how much valuable information, great ideas, motivation, and inspiration they had gained during the course of the event. Appreciation was expressed to both AACT and Hale Centre Theatre for organizing and hosting the conference, with several participants expressing ideas for future TEAM Conferences—and even multiple offers to host the event in the future!

Thank you so much to all those who attended and contributed to the networking and success of the conference. Special thanks to Michael Fox and Hale Centre Theatre for their hospitality and generosity in hosting the event.

Stay tuned for information on future TEAM and other AACT educational opportunities! ♦

Hilarious Comedy Plays!

The Jailhouse Frocks

3 Female, 2 Male | Two Acts
Shattering dimwitted Officer Dwayne's tranquil evening at the Birchwood County police station is the arrests of three unlikely women; the mayor's wife, the local mad cat-lady, and a dangerous looking New Yorker. The already chaotic situation descends into mayhem with the arrival of a New York gangster, disguised as an FBI agent, hell-bent on exacting revenge on his wife. By the end of the night, the ladies have formed a gang, sang some songs, escaped from jail and locked the gangster up in their place, leaving Officer Dwayne wondering how on earth he's managed to make the arrest of a lifetime. Featured songs include "Respect" and "Monster Mash".

The Wedding of the Century

7 Female, 2 Male | Two Acts
Dorothy is a 99-year-old nun who has found the perfect item for her bucket list. She's going to find a man and get married on her 100th birthday next week! Hilarious comedy where the surprises and laughs just keep on coming, and an ending guaranteed to melt even the hardest heart.

The Supermarket Sisterhood

7 Female, 2 Male
As if the daily skirmishes with farcical customers and the dim-witted men in their lives wasn't enough, the women who operate the checkouts at the Discount Co. supermarket are now facing a new boss and the prospect of losing their jobs to automated checkout aisles. It's time for the women to band together and take their fight to the top. Hilarious, madcap humor to tickle your funny bone and stir your heart.

Also available... The Old People Are Revolting, My In-laws are Outlaws, Twas the Fight Before Christmas, How to Train Your Husband, Crazy Ladies, Menopause Made Me Do It... and many more!

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Czech International Festival Looking for American Productions

Tim Jebesen

Since 1931, the city of Hronov in the Czech Republic has been hosting a yearly theatre festival called Jiraskuv Hronov. I was able to attend the 2018 festival from Wednesday, August 8, through Saturday, August 11. The diversity of productions and activities at this festival make it a unique and wonderful performance event.



A production from the Czech Republic examines the concept of creating their own government

Hronov is located about two hours east of Prague, reaching almost to the border of Poland. In the town square, there is a carnival atmosphere, with beer tents and food and drink vendors, along with the local merchants. All of the performances are within walking distance of the square, making it very easy to go from one event to another. During the preceding year, the Czech Republic



Hana Nedvedova, the Mayor of Hronov, and Tim Jebesen, AACT International Committee Chair, visit between performances

Continued on next page ►

From the book by Kate DiCamillo

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holds amateur theatre competitions, with twelve of the performance slots at Jiraskuv Hronov reserved for those winning productions. In addition to the amateur productions, there are also professional productions. Music Concerts are also held in the city park. Jiraskuv Hronov is billed as an international theatre festival, and this year's event included productions from Iceland and Italy. However, the majority of the performances are Czech and thus are performed in the Czech language.

Two of the national organizers for the festival expressed interest in bringing an American production to this festival in 2019. The dates of next year's festival will be August 2 - 10, 2019. An ideal American production would include a smaller travel group (4-8 people) with a production that is 45-75 minutes long. Most Czech people do learn English as a second language, but this production would need to include visual elements along with language. The deadline for submissions is February 1, 2019.

If any troupe from the USA would like to learn more or might be interested, please contact me via e-mail and I will be happy to answer questions or assist you with a submission.

Tim Jebson
Executive Director – Midland Community Theatre
tim@mctmidland.org



Tim Jebson

A production of the farce Two Into One by Ray Cooney is performed in Czech, the official language of the Czech Republic

Tim Jebson has been the Executive Director of Midland (TX) Community Theatre since 1997. Tim also chairs the Department of Drama at Midland College. Tim currently serves on the AITA council for amateur theatre, is the Chair of the AACT International Committee, and is a past Treasurer of the AACT board.

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AACT NewPlayFest World Premiere Cottage Theatre Premieres *Treehouse*



Emily Bly

Opening Night of the World Premiere of Treehouse by Joe Musso at Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove, Oregon

Front row (left to right): Blake Nelson, cast/Oliver; John Eckstine, cast/Ben; Malakhai Schnell, cast/Johnny

Second row (left to right): Cosette Adamson, Sound Operator; Chris Carter, Costume Designer; Tara Wibrew, Director; Tracy Nygard, cast/Susan; Joe Musso, Playwright; Clare McDonald, cast/Alana; Chelsey Megli, cast/Mrs. Ross; Susan Goes, Cottage Theatre Executive Director; Linda M. Lee, Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation; Linda Habjan, Dramatic Publishing Company

Third row (left to right): Marisela Taylor, Light Board Operator; Tony Rust, Set Construction Lead; Kory Weimer, Assistant Director and Set Designer; Randall Brous, Stage Manager; Amanda Ferguson, Lighting Designer; David Cockerell, AACT Marketing and Communications Director; Jon Douglas Rake, AACT Board Member; Chris Serface, AACT Board Member

Cottage Grove, Oregon, celebrated the latest AACT NewPlayFest world premiere when *Treehouse* by Joe Musso opened on August 10, 2018, at Cottage Theatre. Opening night included a sold-out house, an outstanding world premiere production, and an exceptionally festive reception. The production ran through August 26.

Playwright Joe Musso and his wife Kate attended the opening. Joe expressed,

I want to thank everyone at AACT for providing the opportunity for playwrights like me to submit to NewPlayFest. Being named a winner and having my play receive its world premiere at Cottage Theatre has been an awesome experience, one I will never forget.

The folks at Cottage Theatre, especially Executive Director Susan Goes, are amazing. AACT certainly

made the right decision in choosing Cottage Theatre as one of the six theatre companies for NewPlayFest.

AACT's NewPlayFest is by far one of the best new play competitions in the country. Where else can a playwright achieve national publicity, a world premiere production, and publication in an anthology, all in one

Continued on next page ►





Malakbai Schnell, Tracy Nygard, and Blake Nelson in a scene from the Cottage Theatre production of Treehouse by Joe Musso

contest? It also is a great honor for the community theatres selected to participate and for community theatres everywhere. New plays help the theatre community thrive.

In *Treehouse*, Johnny and his pals would be typical 17-year-old boys, hanging out in Johnny's treehouse and dreaming of

talking to the beautiful Alana, were it not for Johnny insisting he is a 53-year-old man trapped in a teenage body. Johnny's mom is a little worried. Out of the blue her son is suddenly pulling straight A's, keeping his room immaculate, and reading Shakespeare. As Johnny persists in his claim, and conversations in the treehouse become increasingly peppered by the words of the Bard, Johnny grapples with adolescence, love, and the mind's ability to heal from

One-Act Play

By Terry Gabbard
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A play about the life of a dog, and the human lives the dog helps to shape into a family. Told through dialogue and the comic visual art Joel creates, this one-act is both playful and poignant.

Joel Pulley, a struggling comic book artist, has his world turned upside down when an over-eager stray dog shows up at his door... repeatedly! This excitable canine is unwavering in his pursuit to be Joel's best friend. It isn't until the escape-artist canine is almost run over in the street by Monica, a vet,

that things change... for everyone. She convinces Joel to adopt the dog, who is quickly named Push for being so pushy and determined. Soon Push pushes Joel's life in fresh directions. Joel finds success through his new comic strip "Push and Pull," and with Monica, he finds a happiness he never knew.

great loss. Through his budding friendship with Alana, Johnny discovers the life-affirming power of the eternal summer that shall not fade. At times poignant, at times humorous, *Treehouse* is a compelling drama that bridges the gap between adolescence and adulthood in beautifully unexpected ways.

Joe Musso lives in Birmingham, Alabama. His plays have been presented in numerous theatres and have won several awards. In addition to being named a winner in AACT's 2018 NewPlayFest, *Treehouse* was also the winner of the 2017 Todd McNerney National Playwriting Award sponsored by the College of Charleston and the winner of Centre Stage South Carolina's 15th Annual New Play Festival. Centre Stage will mount a full-production of *Treehouse* March 26-27 and April 2-3, 2019, in Greenville, South Carolina. From March 28-May 19, 2019, Detroit Repertory Theatre will produce Joe's newest full-length play *Aubrey* in Detroit, Michigan. The Berkshire Theatre Group presented a staged reading of *Aubrey* on July 13, 2018, at the Unicorn Theatre in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Cottage Theatre's world premiere production of *Treehouse* was directed by Tara Wibrew, with set design by Kory Weimer, costume design by Chris Carter, and lighting design by Amanda Ferguson. The cast featured Malakhai Schnell as Johnny and Clare McDonald as Alana, along with Blake Nelson, John Eckstine, Chelsey Megli, and Tracy Nygard.



Treehouse Director Tara Wibrew, Lighting Designer Amanda Ferguson, Set Construction Lead Tony Rust, Costume Designer Chris Carter, and Assistant Director and Set Designer Kory Weimer enjoy the festivities of the world premiere opening night at Cottage Theatre on August 10, 2018.

The 2018 AACT NewPlayFest cycle began with the world premiere production of *Finishing School* by Elaine Liner at Elkhart Civic Theatre in Bristol, Indiana, September 8 – 17, 2017; continued with the world premiere productions of *TBD (To be Determined)* by Paul Elliott at Lincoln Community Playhouse in Lincoln, Nebraska, January 19 – 28, 2018; *Eternity* by Michael Cochran at Stage III Community Theatre in Casper, Wyoming, January 26 – February 26, 2018; *Mynx and Savage* by

Continued on next page ►

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Three different backgrounds.
One shared struggle.**



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—USA Today

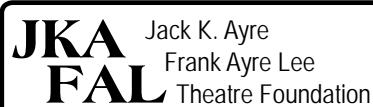


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Treehouse continued from page 19

Rebecca Gorman O'Neill at The Vortex Theatre in Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 27 - May 12, 2018; *Treehouse* by Joe Musso at Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove, Oregon, August 10 - 26, 2018; and concluded with *Sweet* by Denise Hinson at County Seat Theater Company in Cloquet, Minnesota, September 28 - October 7, 2018. See the upcoming January/February 2019 *Spotlight* for a report from County Seat Theater.

AACT NewPlayFest 2018 is made possible in part by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation.



Dramatic Publishing Company publishes AACT NewPlayFest winning plays in anthologies and also licenses production rights for the winning plays. Visit aact.org/dpc for direct links to Dramatic Publishing anthologies and plays. ♦



Emily Bly

*Cottage Theatre Executive Director Susan Goes receives a check from Linda M. Lee from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation onstage during opening night in support of the AACT NewPlayFest world premiere of *Treehouse**



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Experiencing AACT NewPlayFest as a Producing Theatre

Susan Goes

Participating in the AACT 2018 NewPlayFest was a fabulous experience for our theatre from start to finish. We learned a great deal, had a lot of fun in the process, and our entire community shared in the pride of our world premiere production. Our NewPlayFest participation brought us additional grant support, considerable media attention, new volunteers, and first-time audience members. We ended up filling 82% of available seats for the 11-performance run, with opening night completely sold out. Our NewPlayFest experience was a total success!

In the beginning, though, there was plenty of nervousness on the part of our play selection committee and Board. When in 2016 I first proposed that we apply to be a producing theatre, the worries were what one might expect: "Will anyone come to see a play that no one has ever heard of?" "What if we don't like the script we are given to produce?" Once I explained that we would be able to vet the finalists and choose our top three plays, everyone got behind the idea.

We were thrilled when we were selected as a producing theatre, and grew even more excited when we read the twelve finalist scripts in the spring of 2017. In addition to our regular play reading committee, we recruited 17 additional script readers to assist with the vetting process. Each was assigned three plays and asked to complete a short survey to share their reactions. Having extra readers served two goals: it provided us with additional feedback to consider in ranking the scripts, and it built excitement about the NewPlayFest among a broader group of volunteers.

After reading and discussing the twelve plays, we submitted our three favorites to AACT. Shortly thereafter, in May 2017, we learned which play would be ours and who had written it. I immediately set up a phone conference with playwright Joe Musso, and the real fun began!

Continued on next page ►



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Treehouse Producing Theatre continued from page 21

As a Producing Theatre, we had committed to bring Joe to Oregon for the August 2018 premiere performance. We certainly wanted him here for opening night. However, by that point, our production would be set and whatever insights he might offer would be too late. I knew that our production would be much stronger if we could work with him early in our rehearsal process. Luckily, Joe was open to the idea of travelling from Alabama to Oregon twice, so we got busy writing a grant application to a local foundation to secure funding for an additional visit seven weeks before our scheduled opening.



Linda M. Lee

Playwright Joe Musso and Producer Susan Goes share some fun on the set of Treehouse

In the meantime, we recruited a director and production team. Because this was a world premiere, *Treehouse* attracted the attention of one of our area's most talented directors, Tara Wibrew, who has a lot of experience directing new plays but who hadn't ever worked at our theatre before. She ended up being a perfect fit for *Treehouse* and brought a new-to-us sound designer with her. Months later, when it was finally time for auditions, we had a terrific turnout. Not only were the numbers high, but also more than 50% of those present were auditioning at our theatre for the first time, drawn by the excitement of a world premiere.



Treehouse director and cast have lunch with playwright Joe Musso during his first visit to Cottage Theatre

In June, our newly assembled cast had just done one read-through when playwright Joe Musso came to Oregon for his first visit, arriving on a Friday evening and departing the following Tuesday. While here, he participated in two table rehearsals with our team: a half-day session on Saturday, and a two-hour session on Monday evening. Being able to speak directly with the playwright prompted us to ask questions like, “Why does this scene follow on the heels of the one that precedes it?” “Why is this character mentioned but never seen?” and “What inspired you to write this story?” All of this juicy conversation added to our understanding of the work and laid the foundation for a creative collaboration that continued throughout the entire rehearsal process.

Also during that visit, Joe attended an intimate “Dinner with a Playwright” soiree that we held for some theatre donors. On Sunday, he joined our audience for the closing matinee of Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (and even helped us strike the set afterwards!). On Monday, one of our Board members took him sightseeing in the morning and then we spent the afternoon recording some *Treehouse* promotional videos. The culmination of his visit was a public “Meet the Playwright” occasion attended by 100 people. This hour-long event included a catered reception followed by a Q&A session wrapped around a production of Joe’s 10-minute comedy, *The Rollercoaster of Love*, which he had graciously given us permission to produce. The goal of “Meet the Playwright” was to help build some “buzz” for our August premiere, which it did indeed.

We stayed in touch with Joe throughout the ensuing summer rehearsal process, sending him regular rehearsal reports and asking questions as we fine-tuned our production. When he returned in August for opening week, it was like greeting an old friend!

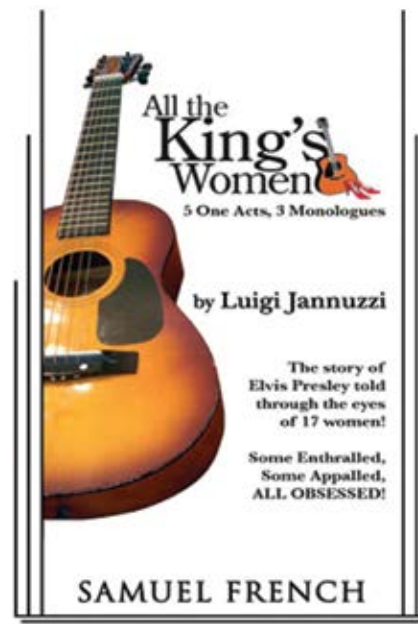
Finally, the moment we’d been working toward for more than two years arrived. Our packed opening night crowd included visiting dignitaries from seven different states, making it our most geographically diverse audience ever. The standing ovation at the end was a tribute to the enormity of this undertaking and all the love that everyone had poured into this play.

Did we invest more time and energy in preparing for this NewPlayFest premiere than for one of our normal shows? Most definitely. Was it worth it? Absolutely! Our hope is that the terrific experience we had with *Treehouse* will help make our audience more receptive to new works in the future. One of our subscribers thought so and shared, “A great show! Makes me realize why we are season ticket holders. I think it would be great to include a new play each year like this. It gives a great way to see new material while still seeing the standards which make up most of the schedule.” All of

us at Cottage Theatre were extremely honored to have been part of this cycle’s AACT NewPlayFest. And the fact that we got to build a really cool tree on our stage was a wonderful bonus! ♦

Susan Goes has served as Executive Director of Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove, Oregon, since 2007.

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AACT Oregon Town Hall Connecting a Community of Theatre People

Dorinda Toner

You know that moment when you make a connection with someone? It's exciting to find those shared experiences and kindred spirits in this busy, busy, world. That is exactly what happened for me on a lovely morning in August at Twilight Theater in Portland, Oregon, where a bunch of folks from all walks of life and experiences gathered to find common ground.

As part of AACT's mission to *Help Theatres Thrive*, the town hall style meeting - facilitated by AACT's Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell, AACT Board member Jon Douglas Rake, and Oregon Community Theatre Alliance's Carolyn McCloskey - encouraged open communication

among the theatres represented. Some of us had never been to a town hall style meeting but we soon found out that the simple premise is just a gathering of a community to discuss common issues. Even though many of us had never met, we were an instant community of theatre people, with local leaders, artistic directors, theatre managers, board presidents, directors, actors, and playwrights all represented.

Topics discussed ranged from programming, operations, fundraising, marketing and publicity, children's programs, sourcing costumes and sets, volunteerism, safety, and finding ways to thrive in and among our communities. The most enlightening parts came when the stories shared were universal. We had all at one



Uinda M. Lee

Representatives from a variety of organizations attended the AACT Oregon Town Hall held at Twilight Theater Company

Front row (l-r): David Cockerell, AACT; Chris Serface, Tacoma Little Theatre; Ron Jorgenson, Twilight Theater Company

Second row (l-r): Rich Rubin; Matt Gibson; Kathleen Tomko, playwright; Carolyn McCloskey, Oregon Community Theatre Alliance; Lisa Joyce, Pentacle Theatre; Christina Taft, Twilight Theater Company; Jon Douglas Rake, Tacoma Music Playhouse

Third row (l-r): Julie Hatfield, Big Britches Productions; Bruce Ludwig, Big Britches Productions; Judith Elliot McDonald, playwright; Joe Garoutte, Columbia River Gorge; April Sampson, Columbia River Gorge; Linda Hardham, Columbia Gorge Orchestra Association and the Performing Arts Initiative; John Hardham, Columbia Gorge Orchestra Association and the Performing Arts Initiative; Bonnie Vorenberg, Art Age Senior Theatre Resource Center; Steve Morrow, Sandy Actors Theatre

Fourth row (l-r): Pat Lach, Twilight Theater Company; Elisabeth Goebel, New Century Players; Nicole Zdeb, Twilight Theater Company; David Roberts, Magenta Theater; Heather Blackthorn, Pacific Stageworks; Shirley J. Cockrell, AACT; Sarah Ominski, Hillsboro Artists' Regional Theatre

Fifth row (l-r): Sarah Fuller, Twilight Theater Company; Jason England, Twilight Theater Company; Dorinda Toner, Twilight Theater Company; Genevieve Larson, Twilight Theater Company

Sixth row (l-r): Chris Murphy, Twilight Theater Company and Community Theater Heroes ; Danyelle Tinker, Twilight Theater Company

point or another stressed about similar challenges and celebrated similar victories. Rather than a sense of competition among neighboring theatres, a shared desire to uplift and support the Arts was paramount. The many benefits offered by AACT were discussed and offers of shared resources and helpful hands were given around the room.

For those of us who dedicate our time and efforts to making community theatres thrive, there can be moments of loneliness and discouragement, but AACT's commitment to providing help and connecting theatres with each other is invaluable. It may not be every day that you discover camaraderie, kindred spirits, and common ground, but if it were going to happen anywhere I believe the Theatre is the most likely place. ♦

Dorinda Toner has spent nearly her whole life on and around the stage. She is the Producing Artistic Director at Twilight Theater Company in Portland, Oregon.

Nominations open in mid November for the 2019 AACT National Awards

AACT National Awards are presented each summer to recognize outstanding contributions to community theatre. Nominations are accepted for persons of all ages. The 2019 Awards will be presented at AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in June.

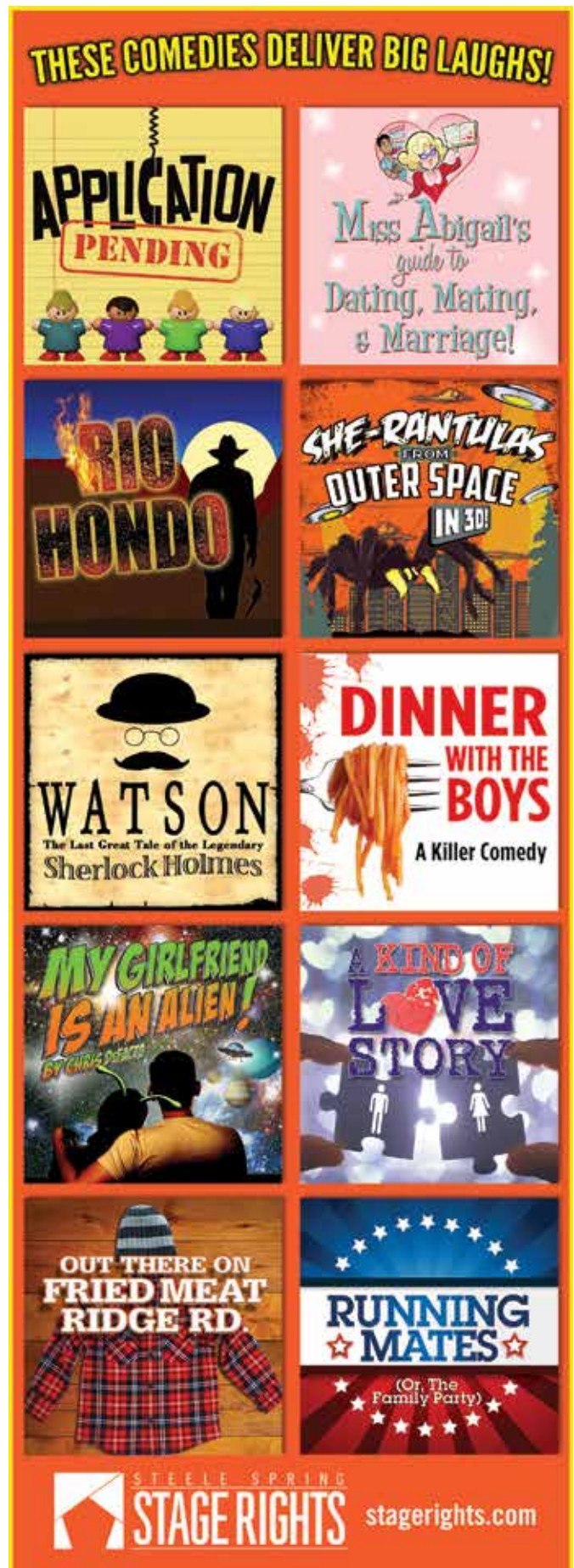
Visit aact.org/national-awards to submit a nomination for 2019.

January 20, 2019 is the deadline to submit nominations.

Visit aact.org/national-awards for a list of AACT National Awards, Award descriptions, links to see who has received Awards in the past, and a link for the AACT National Award Nomination Form.

Nominations are welcome anytime for the **AACT Spotlight Award**.

The Spotlight Award is presented locally by AACT and an AACT member theatre for long or special service that has had a significant impact on the quality of local theatre. Nominations are accepted for persons of all ages. For more detail and to submit a Spotlight Award Nomination visit aact.org/spotlight-award. See Spotlight Award article on page 33. ♦





Social Media Strategies That Will Fill Your Seats

Chris Murphy

Somehow the planets aligned over the weekend and my wife and I both had Saturday night free. No work commitments, no rehearsals, no production meetings, no prior commitments! This meant we could finally steal away an evening to support some of our friends in their latest production.

We arrived at the theatre a little later than anticipated and feared it would be difficult finding a good seat. To our surprise however, we walked into a nearly empty house! How could this be? This theatre company consistently produces quality work, the actors in the play were top-notch, and the show we were seeing was a popular comedy written by a famous playwright.

When I got home I decided to investigate their social media platforms. As I suspected, the company had been neglecting their social media accounts, not engaging with their audience, and as far as I could tell, not implementing good strategies to market themselves.

Theatres today are competing to sustain their audiences' attention like never before. Hoping your audience will simply buy tickets is a losing strategy. In the same vein, theatre companies shouldn't expect audiences to engage and connect with their social media by simply having an account and posting once or twice a month. Like normal marketing, social media marketing takes work and requires certain strategies to be successful, like the strategies outlined below.

Have Consistency in Branding

One of the first things I recommend to theatres and artists is having consistent branding throughout their social media platforms. This includes having the same photo, logo, and/or graphic on each platform as well as the same username or "handle."



AACT is consistently using the AACTFest 2019 logo to promote the event next summer and is using the hashtag #aactfest2019

There are two reasons this is important: first, it allows your patrons or *potential* audience to find or recognize your theatre on

social media easily; second, it gives your theatre company a sense of professionalism.

What should your theatre's username, URL, or handle be?

Ideally, this should be your theatre's name, because that is what your audience will be searching for when they look for you on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

Check to see if your theatre's name is available across all platforms and then create those accounts, even if you do not currently plan to use the platform. The big three platforms are Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter but you may eventually want Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit, Youtube accounts and more, so plan for the future and set them up now.

What do you do if another theatre or person has the social media handle you want?

Yes, that can happen, like it did with my friends at Twilight Theater Company in Portland, Oregon. The name they wanted was taken by another theatre, so they decided to use the handle "Twilight_PDX". Incorporating the name of your city/state/region/etc. is a great Plan B.

Use Live Videos

Live videos rocketed onto the internet marketing scene just a few short years ago and it has changed the way customers and businesses interact, including the way audiences engage with theatres.

Did you know?

- Today 33% of ALL online activity is from videos.
- Video will be responsible for 80% of internet traffic in 2019.
- Currently 50% of mobile web traffic is video, and studies are indicating that number will jump to 75% by 2020.

I understand that "Going Live" on Facebook or Instagram can be intimidating. But, the truth is if your theatre company is not using videos, especially Live Video, to promote its shows, you are already behind and will likely be left behind FOREVER.

Not sure what to go live on? Here are some simple Live Video ideas:

- Rehearsals (Check your license before streaming any copyrighted material.)
- Fundraising Events
- Season Announcement Parties

- Cast Parties
- Set Building Days
- Behind-the-Scenes on Opening Night

These types of live videos will create a huge buzz and give your audience a behind-the-scenes look at the culture of your theatre. That inside look will create a sense of trust, loyalty, and transparency with your audience -- it's personal, shows your community who you are, and allows them to interact, connect, and engage with you in real-time. Furthermore, when you go live, your Call-To-Actions have higher success rates (e.g., "Go buy tickets for our show by clicking the link in the comments!")

Hold Giveaways

Holding giveaways is a fun, simple, and extremely effective way to get massive new audiences to follow you on social media and join your mailing list. People love giveaways! Not only that, it creates a positive online presence and reputation for your theatre.

So, what is the best way to hold a giveaway?

First, decide what prize you will give away.

Sure, you can go the traditional route of giving away season tickets... but, to new audiences that have not yet been delighted by your theatre, this may not be much of an incentive to enter the contest. So, instead consider giving away other prizes, such as Gift Cards to local restaurants or coffee shops (These are also great sponsorship opportunities, by getting a local business to give you a gift certificate for free!).

Second, create a graphic for your Giveaway.

Once you have the perfect prize for your giveaway, you will need to start sharing it on your social media. Before you can do that, you need to create a beautiful, eye-catching, and clear graphic. Keep in mind that over 60% of social media users do so with their mobile devices, so make sure your graphic is mobile-optimized. Having a pixelated and fuzzy graphic will hurt your Giveaway and make your theatre company look amateurish.

Does creating a graphic sound scary or complicated? I recommend using Canva (www.canva.com), a free and easy-to-use website that lets you create custom graphics that are pre-sized for the social media platform you are using!

Third, make the "rules" of your Giveaway simple and clear.

Once you have a killer graphic, it's time to post your Giveaway on your social media. But before you hit "Post," make sure you write crystal clear "rules" for your followers.

For example:

We are giving a \$50 Starbucks Gift Card to one lucky audience member on March 1st! Here's how to enter the Giveaway: (1) Follow our theatre on Facebook (2) Like and comment on this post (3) Share this post on your social media for two extra entries in the Giveaway! If you are a winner, we will notify you on Facebook on March 1st!

Fourth, promote the Giveaway with Facebook Ads. (Optional)

If you really want to create some buzz and excitement, pay for some targeted ads to promote your Giveaway. When you use paid ads for your Giveaway, you will be able to target specific audience demographics and maximize the success of your Giveaway!

Empower Sponsors to Promote Your Shows

Sponsors are one of the backbones of community theatre. Without generous sponsors and donors, many theatres would have trouble keeping the lights on. Unfortunately, it's not enough to list a sponsor in your show's program or your season brochure. In fact, if that is as far as you are going, you're doing a disservice to both your theatre and your sponsor.

Continued on next page ►

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understand the needs of
community theaters."*

- Truckee Community Theatre

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It's imperative that you *empower* your sponsors to promote you on social media.

What do I mean by that? Simply engage with their social media accounts and encourage them to do the same with your theatre.

You can follow their social media accounts, tag them in posts related to the show(s) they are sponsoring, comment on their posts, leave positive reviews, Go Live on Facebook/Instagram to talk about their sponsorship, create personal graphics related to their sponsorship that they can share on their platforms, and/or create sponsor specific flyers that they can advertise or hand out in their places of business.

When you and your sponsors engage with each other through social media, you are broadening your reach and opening yourselves up to untouched new audiences. This can be a game changer for both of you. In addition, it will encourage them to sponsor your theatre in future seasons!

• • •

Statistics show that over 75% of the US population is on social media, and that number is increasing each day. Now is the time for your theatre to engage your audiences on social media. I understand that it can often be confusing, scary, time-consuming, and daunting... but as creators of theatre we are accustomed to challenges! Start implementing the strategies I have just outlined, and don't be afraid to try new things and discover your own strategies. Soon your audience and reach will expand on social media causing an influx of ticket sales.

If you have questions or need one-on-one coaching, do not hesitate to reach out to me for advice. I want your theatre to thrive! ♦

Chris Murphy is a social media manager, director, actor, and co-host of the Community Theater Heroes podcast. If you have any questions about Internet or social media marketing, please connect with Chris by emailing him at ChristopherCalvinMurphy@gmail.com

Community Theater Heroes creates premier podcasts dedicated to community theatre around the nation. Episodes include interviews with theatre companies, artistic directors, actors, stage managers, touring shows, and other artists, offering listeners the best career advice, marketing tips, inspiring stories, anecdotes, and more. For more information or to be interviewed on the show, please visit communitytheaterheroes.com.



BARD ARTS PLAYS

FunBirds (5 F, 2 M) Roger Coyne, recently divorced, swears that, in the modern age, monogamous relations are obsolete. "In an age of abundance," he says, "a man can have two of anything—including women." His FunBirds, Edna and Desiree, compete with each other, then agree to cooperate. They devise a plot to teach Roger a lesson. Obsession matches obsession leading to ludicrous ruin.



An Examined Life

An Examined Life. [2F, 1M] Arno, a philosopher, feels that he has failed in life. His life-examination consists of conversations with the ghost of his youthful teacher, Max, who still dominates his psyche. His student, Trudy, persuades him to engage in "an enlightened conversation," and finds a way to free the Prof from his demon.



FunBirds

For these and other Bard Arts plays visit bardartsnyc.com. Email: bardarts@verizon.net

Going Solo in Community Theatre

Quiana Clark-Roland
Executive Director

This past September, I had the pleasure of experiencing an immersive weekend of solo performances and devised theatre. Starting with a one-woman piece called *Hollow Roots* by Christina Anderson at the South Dallas Cultural Arts Center in Dallas, Texas, and ending with the second Annual Fort Worth Fringe Festival presented by Texas Nonprofit Theatres (TNT). One of the many highlights at the Fort Worth Fringe was the performance of *Pichanga*. Previously performed at aactWorldfest 2018 by La Criatura Theater Company from Santiago, Chile, *Pichanga* is the true story of Cristian (the performer in this play), who was born in 1990 just after the Pinochet dictatorship was over, when kids could start to dream again. Both pieces were very powerful and told stories that were unique to their cultural experiences. After Fort Worth Fringe, *Pichanga* toured around the U.S. with its next stop at AACT member, World Stage Theatre Company in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

and projections, words and phrases uttered hundreds of times a day that often go unheard. I asked Karen what it was like to perform a devised solo piece and what was involved in getting it onstage.



Linda M. Lee

Karen Matheny performs at the Fort Worth Fringe Festival in *Smile, Princess*

How do you think these solo pieces relate to Community Theatre?

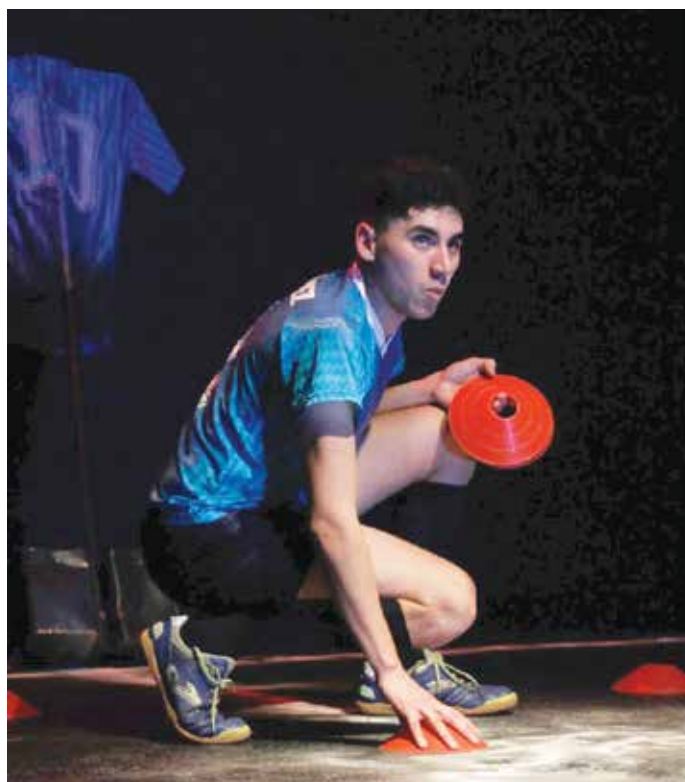
"Monologue shows are not new to community theatres. They are easy shows to incorporate into a season as less rehearsal time is needed with minimal set and costume needs. Overall they are easy for even the smallest budget theatres to pull off. As for the subject matter of our show, there are monologues that everyone can relate to (large people, women, straight men, gay men, Trans men/women, bi-sexuals, even virgins)."

What was the methodology the director used for writing the monologues?

"Stefany Cambra (our director) was very relaxed with the directing process, which was perfect because of the vulnerability of the subject matter. She drafted pre-written monologues about various subjects and sent them to us to look over and add our own

Continued on next page ►

La Criatura Theatre Company



Christian López from La Criatura Theatre Company in Chile performs *Pichanga* at aactWorldFest2018

To learn a little bit more about how one might produce or devise a solo/monologue performance, I spoke with AACT Staff Karen Matheny about her performance at Fort Worth Fringe in *Smile, Princess* with AACT member theatre Tarrant Actors Regional Theatre and Proper Hijinx Productions. *Smile, Princess* is a series of devised monologues that identify the unique experiences we go through. Each performer shares a monologue rooted in real-world honesty, connected to their personal history. Their stories are echoed by the confessions of others through voice recordings

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thoughts. In the first rehearsal she asked what I would change. I gave her some simple edits and then she started asking me about my past and connection to the subject matter. We talked for about an hour and she made tweaks to the monologue. We ended up with something that had the same bones of the original work she had written, but she fleshed it out and made it *my* monologue as opposed to something generic."

What was the audience's feedback?

"We had a lot of good feedback. I was worried about performing my monologue because these were all our stories and personal truths. So I was definitely worried about the parts of my monologue where I called out certain things, because I knew I would have friends in the audience who would hear that and go, "oh no...that's about me." But no one called me out. Instead, I got really positive

responses about my honesty, my delivery, and how they liked the entire concept of the show."

In what ways is it different performing at a festival versus a full production? How much time did you prepare?

"The amount of time spent rehearsing is definitely a big difference. We had two personal one-on-one rehearsals with our director. The first rehearsal was re-writing our monologues to fit each actor better. Then as a group we had three rehearsals. No tech in the space. Our first show was our first time with set, props, and lights. For me the festival atmosphere was kind of chaotic. Because I am so used to the structure of the typical rehearsal period and tech, I was not prepared for the more relaxed environment. But moving forward I will be better prepared."

Solo performances may not always be a big draw for mainstage productions, but could work well in a black box, lab/workshop environment, and/or even at an arts/theatre festival like AACTFest! For the past few years, AACT member Theatre Esprit Asia in Aurora, Colorado, has won numerous awards and recognition for its solo performances at AACTFest and aactWorldfest.

That weekend experience reminded me of how accessible and easily mountable solo pieces can be and how they bring a new perspective and voice to stories not yet heard. At its essence, it is the art of "Storytelling." Whether you are part of a theatre group or an individual artist, I challenge you to create theatre in the space that you are in and not feel obligated to wait for that next big production. The only parameters that exist within theatre are the ones we create. You never know what you will learn or whom you will inspire in the process. ♦

FIRST PLACE – International Mystery Writers Festival
FIRST RUNNER-UP – Robert J. Pickering Award for Playwriting

"WLT audiences are still talking about ABSOLUTELY DEAD – the best mystery they've seen in years!! We not only 'filled the house,' we extended the run and sold that out too!"
 – Director, Sara Gomez,
 Winchester Little Theatre President

ABSOLUTELY DEAD
 by Michael Walker

There Comes a Time

On Stage:
Seacoast Repertory Theatre
 Portsmouth, NH
 Homegrown Series
 November 1-11, 2018

Winchester Little Theatre
 Winchester, VA
 March, 2017
 Sold Out 3-week run!
 Added performances!

walkerplays.com



Renee Moevly

At aactWorldFest 2018, Maria Cheng from Theatre Esprit Asia in Denver, Colorado, performs Spirit and Sworded Treks containing personal stories of the journey of a Chinese immigrant

Silent Partners?

Geoff Leonard-Robinson
Membership Director

The role of the AACT Membership Director and Membership Engagement Team is actually two-fold: 1. to reach out and develop ways in which the association can actively engage with its members, 2. to encourage members to engage with the national organization and its members in order to add value through collaboration and participation in educational, festival, and other opportunities offered through AACT membership. Efforts to fulfill the first charge include theatre tours (visits); personal engagement with members at state, regional, and national events; individual member contacts from Team members just to check in from time to time, as well as for membership renewals and benefit reminders; townhalls; and providing personalized assistance on a variety of issues when requested.

Members also have access to a variety of membership and marketing materials on AACT's website.

Engagement of members with AACT and other members also takes many forms: attendance at educational conferences, festivals, and other AACT produced or sanctioned events; formal and informal feedback on the value received from various programming; communication regarding other benefits and services that could add value to membership; and the offering of assistance to other members during times of great challenge. But, there are also other ways in which member organizations can promote their partnership and participation with AACT.


In addition to the "Member of AACT" window sticker sent with membership packets, members also have access to a variety of membership and marketing materials on AACT's website: AACT membership logos for use in programs and newsletters, as well as on websites and posters, etc. (go to aact.org/logos); program ad copy of various sizes in both color and black and white (go to aact.org/aact-ads) including program ads promoting AACTFest 2019. By displaying the "Member of AACT" window sticker, including the AACT logo on your theatre website and printed programs, and including AACT program ads, member theatres identify themselves as part of a national association. This designation allows patrons, donors, and volunteers to know that their local community theatre participates in the collaborative, educational, and resource opportunities with nearly 2,000 other members of a national theatre organization. We hope that such affiliation is a source of pride for our members, as well as helpful when presenting information on your organization as part of funding solicitations.

However, when visiting with member theatres or reviewing their websites and programming schedules on their websites, it can be surprising how often one finds no mention or symbol of their association with AACT (e.g., no logo on website or in programs,

etc.). While program space can sometimes be a limiting factor, oftentimes available "white space" does exist. With regard to websites, of course numerous theatres have an outside webmaster or volunteer who manages that aspect of their marketing. In those instances, an inclusion of the AACT logo to promote your membership requires direction from the theatre.

There are many theatres who do include an AACT logo on their websites—some prominently. AACT is very appreciative of those theatres for proudly displaying their membership in the association

Continued on next page ►



SCRIPTS!
The Curse of Frankenstein's Castle

An original, full-length comedy based on the classic novel by Mary Shelley and the quintessential horror movies of the 1930's & 40's. Genre: **Comedy-Halloween**; Full Length Play; Length: 2 ½ hours; Cast: 19 parts. Can double cast; Suitable for: Most ages, rated PG; Set: Multiple Indoor & outdoor; Time Period: 1880's Germany

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*Lorelei Chapman, Asst. Director
Liberty Showcase Theatre*

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Audrey Kletscher Helbing, Minnesota Prairie Roots



A contemporary romantic comedy about a self-absorbed Hollywood star who's forced to return to his small hometown and direct the community holiday play where he rediscovers the joy of Christmas, a lost love, and learns to embrace his inner Santa.

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by Laura Ambler and Mala Burt

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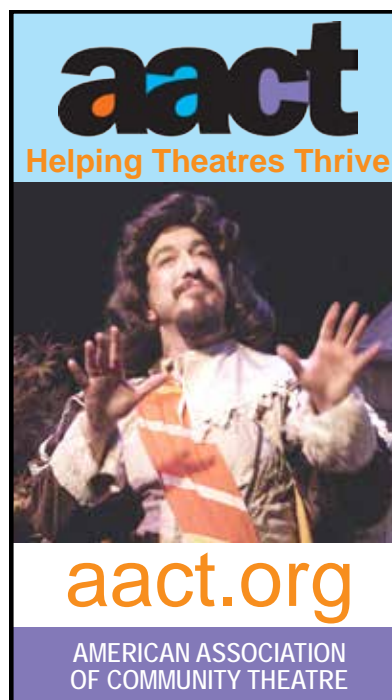
www.amblerburt.com/the-santa-diaries
Contact us at santadiariesplay@gmail.com

Silent Partners *continued from page 31*

to their patrons and visitors. As a side note, the AACT logo tagline was changed in 2016 from "Improving Communities One Theatre at a Time" to "Helping Theatres Thrive." This change focused the association's mission on addressing the needs and support of theatres (who certainly do, in turn, improve their respective communities). However, there are numerous websites still displaying the previous version of the AACT logo. The change is a relatively recent one, so if possible, updating to the new logo would be beneficial in presenting a consistent and unified message as we move forward together.

AACT highly values the presence and participation of all its members. By working as partners, between both AACT and its membership and AACT members to one another, we can have a positive impact not only in preserving the performance art we all love, but also in strengthening member theatres, expanding the work we do, and truly making our world a better place. Our hope is for an ever-growing association of member theatres, not silent in their partnerships, but rather proudly proclaiming the reach of their participation and influence beyond the borders of their communities and states through partnering with theatres around the nation as a member of the American Association of Community Theatre.

As always, please don't hesitate to share your thoughts, ideas, concerns, and suggestions with your national theatre association. Together we are stronger! ♦



An AACT program ad, downloadable from aact.org/aact-ads. Ads are available in half and quarter page sizes, in color or black and white. Shown here: quarter page vertical.

Spotlight Award Honors Sue McCollum

The AACT Spotlight Award partners AACT with theatres to recognize individuals and organizations for long or special service that has had a significant impact on the quality of their local theatres. Any AACT member theatre may apply to present the Spotlight Award. For more detail and to submit a Spotlight Award Nomination visit aact.org/spotlight-award.

Highlands Little Theatre (HLT), honored **Sue McCollum** with the AACT Spotlight Award at HLT's annual Thakkar Awards on April 21, 2018. A round of applause was heard as HLT Executive Director Vanessa Logsdon presented Sue with the Award. Sue's eyes filled with tears as she accepted the Spotlight Award, and she said, "I am deeply honored!"

Sue McCollum's service at Highlands Little Theatre (Sebring, Florida) spans more than 40 years! Sue first got involved with theatre in 1974 when she attended an organizational meeting which laid the ground work for what is now Highlands Little Theatre. Sue made her debut on the HLT stage in July of that year as Imogene Pickens in *Pure As The Driven Snow*. And that was just the beginning of her journey.

Since that time, Sue has been part of the cast and crew of over 100 productions. Sue's many roles at HLT include actor, director, set designer, production coordinator, usher, and bartender. Sue has served on the Board of Directors as President, as well as other positions including Secretary. Support through volunteering has always been the cornerstone of her service.

In 2000, Sue was named the 15th recipient of HLT's highest honor – the Janelou Buck Significant Achievement Award. Four years later she was unanimously voted as a Life Member of Highlands Little Theatre. Her work has continued on stage, but more importantly behind the scenes.

Under Sue's leadership as Chair, the annual Patriotic Revue Fundraiser has become a mainstay of the community. On July 4th HLT offers free shows for all patrons. Funds from donations and food sales at the event go toward scholarships for performing arts students of all ages. ♦



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New Roles

Member Theatre Professional Staffing Changes

Tri Cities, Washington – **The Academy of Children's Theatre (ACT)** has announced the promotion of **Anne Spilman** to Executive Director. In her new position she will be responsible for managing the vision, growth, and sustainability of ACT. Anne also will be in charge of business operations and facility management.

A graduate of Pacific Lutheran University, Anne is also a graduate of Leadership Tri Cities and currently serves on its Board. She was recognized in 2016 by the Tri Cities Area Journal of Business with its Young Professionals Award. Her other community involvements include serving on the founding Board of The Rude Mechanicals, and volunteering with the local Girls on the Run. Anne also is a member of Powerful Connections, a women's business networking group.

Anne has a long history with ACT beginning with her participation in its programs as a youth. In recent years, she has held the positions of Managing Director, Interim Director, and Development & Special Events Coordinator. In addition, Anne has been a director, choreographer, and drama instructor at ACT. She brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the new position.

"Anne's lifelong connections to ACT create a unique perspective that will facilitate her ability to lead and manage the organization. Anne is the perfect complement to the team at ACT who are all working so hard to bring theatre and performance arts to the youth in our community," said Nancy Schenter, president of the ACT Board of Directors.

Congratulations, Anne!

Keep Everyone "In The Know"

- Hired a new member on your artistic or management team?
- Added a new professional position to your staff?
- Changed the title/responsibilities of one of your team members?

Help AACT members join in celebrating your organization's developments and stay up-to-date with whom to contact at your organization by submitting your professional staffing changes to *Spotlight* for inclusion in "New Roles."

Positions listed are paid professional positions. Submissions should be sent to: Geoff Leonard-Robinson at geoff@aact.org.

Visit the Job Postings on the AACT website at aact.org/jobs. Job postings are frequently added, so check back often.

Have a job to post? Visit aact.org/jobs to post your job opening for FREE!

Make A Legacy Gift

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

To learn more about AACT's Legacy Society,
visit aact.org/legacy

or contact the AACT office
at info@aact.org

Spotlight on Discounter

Stage Rights

Stage Rights is one of the leading independent theatrical publishers in the United States, providing stage performance rights for a wide range of plays and musicals to theatre companies, schools, and other producing organizations across the country and around the world.



Stage Rights combines award-winning customer service with audience-pleasing hit plays and musicals. As a licensing agent, Stage Rights is committed to providing each producer the tools they need for financial and artistic success.

AACT members receive a 50% discount on ALL digital peripherals at: www.stagerights.com/

Visit aact.org/discounts for Member Discounts and Special Offers

Artie's Advocacy Tip

Make a difference. Vote!



Critical issues affecting the arts are on the line. Your voice matters.

The arts and humanities make us human. Vote for support of the arts and arts education in your community and across the country. You can make a difference

The National Endowment for the Arts advances learning, fuels creativity, celebrates the arts, and builds the field of the nonprofit arts in America through arts disciplines, fields, and programs. ♦

AACT Web Power

If you have a position you're trying to fill, post the job announcement - free of charge - on the AACT website. Whether you're advertising an administrative, technical, support staff, or artistic position, you can include a job description, application details, contact information - even a link to your website for additional details. Go to aact.org, click on the menu's "Networking," then "Job Postings."

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



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Charlie Burns



Doobie Potter (director for Jewel Box Theatre entry), Sharon Burum (AACT Board Member), and Paula McGee (McAlester Community Theatre) sharing one of the many fun moments at Oklahoma's state festival, OCTAFest 2018, hosted by Shawnee Little Theatre, July 21, 2018.

Dennis Gilmore, AACT Region VIII Representative, presents Gai Jones the AACT Distinguished Merit Award in her home theatre, the Ojai (California) Arts Center Theater, following a production of Disney's The Little Mermaid JR. (which Gai directed), August 10, 2018. The award was one of the National Awards announced during the AACT Annual Meeting in Venice, Florida, in conjunction with aactWorldFest, June 2018.



Kevin King

CenterPoint Legacy Theatre (Centerville, Utah) staff hosted AACT Membership Director Geoff Leonard-Robinson on August 16, 2018. Pictured (L-R): Derek Walden (Technical Director), Diana Jensen (Box Office Manager), Amy Gapinski (Marketing Coordinator), Geoff Leonard-Robinson, Shelley Davies (Director of Development), Holly Reid (Assistant Director of Development), and Jansen Davis (Executive Director).



CenterPoint Legacy Theatre



*The AACT Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award was posthumously awarded to **David Zacharias** by AACT Region VIII Representative **Dennis Gilmore** on August 24, 2018, at **Playhouse Merced** (California) at their 25th Season kickoff sold-out performance of *Titanic*. David was a founding Board member and worked with **Playhouse Merced** for 25 years, serving in many capacities. **Playhouse Merced** has dedicated its 25th season in memory of David. Accepting the award from Dennis Gilmore (far right) on David's behalf were family members (L-R) Tyler Zacharias and Savannah Zacharias (grandchildren), Brian Zacharias (son), and Holly Zacharias (David's wife).*



*Florida Community Theatre Festival Chair **Dan Chesnicka** and AACT Festival Commissioner **Susan Austin** present awards during the awards/closing ceremonies on August 11, 2018, at **Theatre Winter Haven**.*

*(Pictured L-R) **Ginger Heath** (AACT North Carolina State Contact) presented the AACT Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award to **Pat Heiss** during the opening production of *Peter and the Starcatcher*, marking the opening of **Theatre Charlotte's** 91st season, on September 7, 2018.*



(Pictured L-R) **Susan Goes** (*Cottage Theatre Executive Director*) and **Carolyn McCloskey** (*AACT Oregon State Contact*) share a moment at **Cottage Theatre** in Cottage Grove, Oregon, at the world premiere of *Treehouse* by Joe Musso (one of the 2018 NewPlayFest winning scripts/playwrights) on August 10, 2018.



Gilbert Chu

Emily Bly



Dignitaries attending the world premiere of *Treehouse* at **Cottage Theatre** in Cottage Grove, Oregon, on August 10, 2018. Pictured L-R: **Joe Musso** (playwright), **Linda M. Lee** (Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation), **Chris Serface** (AACT Board Member At Large and Tacoma Little Theatre Managing Artistic Director), **Susan Goes** (Cottage Theatre Executive Director), **Jon Douglas Rake** (AACT Region IX Representative and Tacoma Musical Playhouse Managing Artistic Director), **Linda Habjan** (Dramatic Publishing Company Vice President of Acquisitions), and **David Cockerell** (AACT Marketing/Communications Director).

Peoria Players Theatre (IL) was honored with the Excellence in Community Theatre Award by the **Illinois Theatre Association** at its annual gala and awards celebration on August 25, 2018. The theatre is also one of the newest inductees into the AACT Century Club, celebrating its 100th anniversary during the 2018-2019 season. Pictured (L-R): **Allan Kimball** (ITA President), **Nicki Haschke** (Peoria Players Theatre Business Administrator), **Aimee-Lynn Newlan** (ITA Executive Director), and **Richard Gannon** (AACT Board of Directors Member At Large). **Peoria Players Theatre** will also be hosting the Illinois State Theatre Festival for AACTFest 2019 in March 2019.

Gracie Meier



Meet King Insurance Group

Grice King

King Insurance Group is privileged to partner with AACT to assist all of its members in their current and future commercial insurance needs. We offer stand-alone general liability, package liability policies with either property or equipment coverage included, directors' and officers' liability with employment practices liability included, and volunteer accident coverage. We can write any combination of all those coverages, depending on your needs.



Nikki and Grice King

For the past fourteen years, Ken Roberts with USI has been in charge of helping everyone. He is now passing the torch as he focuses on other parts of his business with USI. Nothing is changing except that King Insurance Group is assuming the

**Small community values
are how we handle
ourselves in business and
in our daily lives.**

management of the renewals and new policy theatre business as of October 1, 2018. We are a small but dedicated group planning to focus on the best ways to help your theatre stay protected.

To introduce myself, my name is Grice King. My wife Nikki and I own and operate King Insurance Group. We were both born and raised in the small, close-knit community of Gainesville, Texas. Dubbed "the most patriotic small town in America," Gainesville is also the only Medal of Honor host

city. Small community values are how we handle ourselves in business and in our daily lives, like being courteous and as helpful as possible.

We both run the agency and also own a small local weekly newspaper that my late father and I started over fifteen years ago. Nikki joined the team almost four years ago in multiple capacities. Nikki and I have five beautiful children, ranging from five to twelve years of age. Nikki is the daughter of Ken Roberts, with whom everyone is familiar. Nikki was raised in the local Butterfield Stage theatre where Ken himself was a star for many years. One of our daughters is now performing there in their younger performances like *Charlotte's Web* and *Curiosity Cat*. Theatre was a huge part of Nikki's life and is now a part of our family life. With long-time business experience and love for the theatre, together we feel we make a perfect team.

This is an exciting time when we can dedicate our lives to things we love. We are working closely with Ken and USI to make sure everyone is taken care of throughout this process. We look forward to speaking with everyone and hopefully becoming friends along the way. Thanks to Ken Roberts, USI, and AACT for giving us the opportunity to serve your insurance needs. We are proud to be part of the AACT community. ♦

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AACT Corporate Partners

Much of the work of the American Association of Community Theatre would not be possible without the generous support of our Corporate Partners, who are listed below. We thank each of them for their commitment to AACT--and to the work of community theatres everywhere.

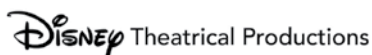
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Southeastern Theatre Conference 70th Annual Convention

Knoxville, Tennessee
February 27 - March 3, 2019

Each year, the Southeastern Theatre Conference invites theatre lovers of all kinds — actors, singers, dancers, designers, technicians, stage managers, directors, playwrights, teachers, students, professionals, academicians, etc. — to gather together in celebration of the art of theatre. The annual SETC Convention brings over 4,000 members of the theatre community together for three and a half days of workshops, keynotes, performance festivals, auditions, college recruiting, job interviews, and more.

Registration Opens: Oct. 15, 2018 (Noon ET)

Early-Bird Registration Deadline: Dec. 14, 2018 (Noon ET)

Listings do not imply AACT endorsement

Online Registration Deadline: Jan. 22, 2019 (Noon ET)

Hotel Reservations Open: Nov. 12, 2018

Conference Hashtag: #SETC2019

A 10-Minute Play Festival is open to all SETC convention attendees. All you have to do is apply and be ready to create and produce a production within 24 hours. Applications will be available as part of the online convention registration process.

Southeastern Theatre Conference, Inc.
1175 Revolution Mill Drive, Studio 14
Greensboro, NC 27405

Phone 336-272-3645
Email: info@setc.org

setc.org/convention/

III International Young Theatre Playwriting Contest

Editorial Dalya
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España

The contest aims to encourage the creation of bold and powerful plays for young audiences. Open to all writers worldwide and there is no age limit or nationality for the entrants. Co-authored plays by more than one writer are accepted. Plays may be in any European language.

Plays must be a new, original and unpublished in any form previously. The play must cater for a performance time of 60-120 mins (category A), or 30-60 mins (category B).

Authors of the winning scripts will be awarded: Category (A) 5000 € (cash prize of 2400 €, plus the publication of the work and translation to other language, and public reading of the play). Category (B) 3500€ (cash prize of 1000 €, plus the publication and translation to other language, and public reading of the play).

Deadline: December 15, 2018

No entry fee

Submission via online link (See full rules download on the website)

See the website for more details: ytpwc.edalya.com/

The Robert J. Pickering Award for Playwriting Excellence

Branch County Community Theatre
14 S. Hanchett St.
Coldwater, MI 49036

This annual award was established to honor past member and playwright, Bob Pickering, and to provide a vehicle for playwrights to see their works produced. Over 30 plays have been produced since 1984.

Open to full length, unproduced plays and musicals. Children's plays accepted. Branch County Community Theatre reserves the right and agrees to produce the first place winner in this yearly competition. First place winners are required to sign a production contract.

Deadline: December 31, 2018

\$200 is awarded for first place, \$50 for second place and \$25 for third place.

No email submissions

See the website for more details:
branchcct.org/pickering

For More New Play Contests see aact.org/contests

| When | Who/What | Where | Information |
|----------------|--|------------------------|---|
| Nov 1 - June 3 | American Association of Community Theatre AACT Design Competition online registration | | 817-732-3177 aact.org |
| Nov 1 - Mar 1 | American Association of Community Theatre AACTFest 2019 Early Bird online registration | | 817-732-3177 aact.org/19 |
| Nov 2 - 3 | Arkansas Community Theatre Association Battle on the Boards, Arkansas State Festival for AACTFest 2019 | AR Little Rock | 501-908-1099 facebook.com/ARCTA2007 |
| Nov 2 - 4 | Alabama Conference of Theatre ACTFest19, Alabama State Festival for AACTFest 2019 | AL Tuscaloosa | 205-483-2282 alabamaconferenceoftheatre.com/about-2-2/ |
| Nov 4 | West Virginia Theatre Conference West Virginia State Festival for AACTFest 2019 | WV Athens | 304-599-7025 wvtheatreassociation.org/ |
| Nov 8 - 11 | South Carolina Theatre Association Georgia State Festival for AACTFest 2019 | SC Anderson | 864-729-2999 southcarolinatheatre.com |
| Nov 16 - 17 | Kentucky Theatre Association Kentucky State Festival for AACTFest 2019 | KY Madisonville | 270-584-4306 theatreky.org |
| Nov 16 - 18 | Theatre Association of New York State New York State Festival for AACTFest 2019 | NY Auburn | 315-685-8193 tanys.org |

For dates further ahead, check the website: aact.org/calendar

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