

spotlight

November/December 2019 \$5.00

american association of community theatre

**Army
Entertainment**

**AACT
NewPlayFest
2020**

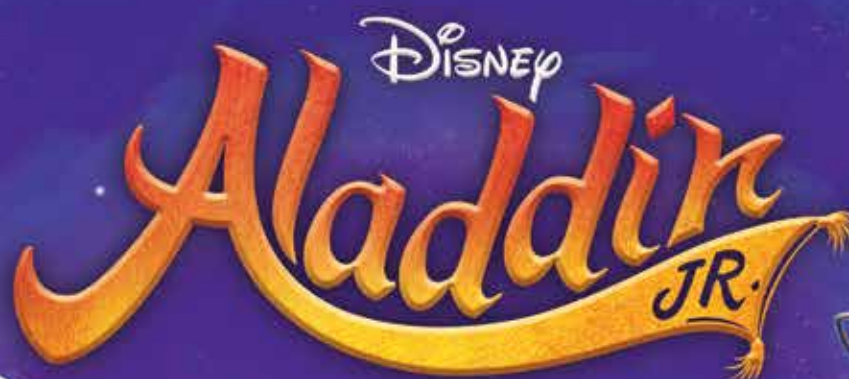
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Rick Kerby
AACT President

To be or not to be.... *Community Theatre*?

There seems to be the question I hear repeatedly when attending conventions or festivals. Is the term “community theatre” outdated?

For many outside our knowing circle of community theatre friends, the term sometimes becomes an easy punchline, tossed around as an example of poor-quality theatre.

So, if general usage of the term now suggests that we are somehow regarded less favorably than our capable companies deserve, has the time come to redefine ourselves?

If not *community* theatre, then what are we?

Many things. We are a place where tomorrow’s stars get their start. We are a safe refuge for young actors to find inclusion and acceptance. We are a resource where experienced directors, musicians, and designers share and showcase their expertise. We are a place where the most mature actors can take a late-in-life chance to step onstage for the very first time. We are a place where people come to escape their “real” lives and practice what they love—the art of live theatre.

A few years ago, my home theatre debuted a world premiere musical. It was a taxing, exhausting, and yet thrilling experience. This same musical was recently produced again for its “professional” world premiere, starring a number of famous Broadway names.

As you can imagine, it was thrilling to have been a step along the way for a Broadway-bound musical. I bought my plane ticket

and whisked my way off to support the show and enjoy a new interpretation of the same script. I came home proud of what we had done in comparison to this “professional” theatre. And I can honestly say that our little community theatre had a much stronger production. Maybe it was because in community theatre we work without the constraints of union regulations, or that we can have a longer rehearsal schedule to allow more time for our actors to work with the material, or maybe our tech team had more resources because we are using volunteers. Regardless, our production made me proud. Proud to be called a *community* theatre!

I have found several definitions for community theatre. All were similar, but here is my favorite from Wikipedia: *Community theatre refers to theatrical performance made in relation to particular communities—its usage includes theatre made by, with, and for a community.*

By this definition, isn’t *every* theatre experience community theatre? All theatre draws from and represents the community it serves, whether it be Broadway, NYC, or Bradenton, FL.

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Come to the festival for the exciting shows, workshops, and international friendships. Then stay to enjoy all Venice, Florida, has to offer

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Mark your calendars now for the next national festival, June 14-19, 2021, in the vibrant, arts-friendly city of Louisville, Kentucky

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From the perspective of the Marketing Track, a report on the synergy and relatability of this national conference

On the Cover

Laurel Cooney, Emily Sherwood, Edward Gaietto, and SGT John E. Watson III in the Stuttgart Theatre Center production of *Kaleidoscope* by Ray Bradbury at AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The production received several awards at AACTFest 2019, including Outstanding Achievement in Ensemble Performance, Outstanding Achievement in Lighting Design, the Backstage Award, Excellence in Sound Design, and Outstanding Theatrical Moment for the meteor impact scene. The Stuttgart Theatre Center in Stuttgart, Germany, has been serving the American Military Community since the 1960s. Photo by Paola Noguerras

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VIII Dennis Gilmore
Indio, CA (2019)
IX Jon Douglas Rake
Tacoma, WA (2019)
X Dane Winters
Germany (US Army) (2019)

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

AACT Executive Committee Fall Meeting

November 14
Madison, Wisconsin
aact.org/calendar

AACT National Community Theatre

Directors Conference
November 15 – 17
Madison, Wisconsin
aact.org/ctdc

Thanks

Hale Centre Theatre and Michael Fox
for hosting TEAMS 2019

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Spotlight

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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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AACT NewPlayFest 2020

World Premieres



AACT NewPlayFest continues to be a great success, with original plays being produced as world premieres across the country. Below is a listing for the Class of 2020. For more information about each play, visit: aact.org/premieres.

All winning plays are available for production through Dramatic Publishing Company, following each play's NewPlayFest premiere, as explained below.



Pamela Harbaugh

Casserole by Pamela Harbaugh
Boise Little Theater
Boise, Idaho
October 18 – November 2, 2019
boiselittletheater.org
208-342-5104

A publisher wants to feature Clair Wilson's recipe for "Mayonnaise Casserole" in a new cookbook. Her grumpy husband and artist daughter

are not much help. The "hipster" editor and his photographer arrive for dinner with a hidden agenda. Secrets are revealed, setting the stage for Clair's loving wisdom.

Due to the constraints of our printing deadlines, the production of *Casserole*, a family comedy by Pamela Harbaugh at Boise Little Theater, will be highlighted in the January/February 2020 issue of *Spotlight*.



Pat Montley

Shattering by Pat Montley
Tacoma Little Theatre
Tacoma, Washington
January 24 – February 9, 2020
tacomalittletheatre.com
253-272-2281

Jacqueline Dawson witnessed her son's murder, and testified against the perpetrators. Now the gang leader who organized that crime wants to teach a lesson about what happens to "snitches."



Dan Borengasser

Goat Song Revel by Dan Borengasser
Manatee Performing Arts Center
Bradenton, Florida
February 6 – 23, 2020
manateeperformingartscenter.com
941-748-5875

A one-person Greek chorus named Doris shows up at the biblical Job's house, and lets him know that her arrival most likely means they're in a Greek drama. But whether it's a tragedy or comedy isn't clear until Dionysus, God, and Satan show up, as well.



Mark Cornell

On Pine Knoll Street by Mark Cornell
The Sauk
Jonesville, Michigan
February 6 – 16, 2020
thesauk.org
517-849-9100

When Marilyn asks Curtis to care for her 87-year-old memory-challenged mother (and her beloved cats) while she is at the beach, a friendship is set into motion that tethers two families.



Laura King

The Cayuga Canal Girls by Laura King
Phoenix Stage Company
Oakville, Connecticut
March 20 – 29, 2020
phoenixstagecompany.org
860-417-2505

Five female childhood friends reunite in their historic hometown of Seneca Falls, New York, to lay one of their own to rest. As they struggle to come to grips with the surprising death, a door opens to a cleansing promise of new possibilities.



Marilyn Millstone

Proprioception by Marilyn Millstone
Rover Dramawerks
Plano, Texas
April 23 – May 9, 2020
roverdramawerks.com
972-849-0358

When their physical therapist decides that two unusual women should share appointments, attachments form, conflicts erupt, secrets surface, and lives unravel, all shedding light on how we heal—and how we don't.

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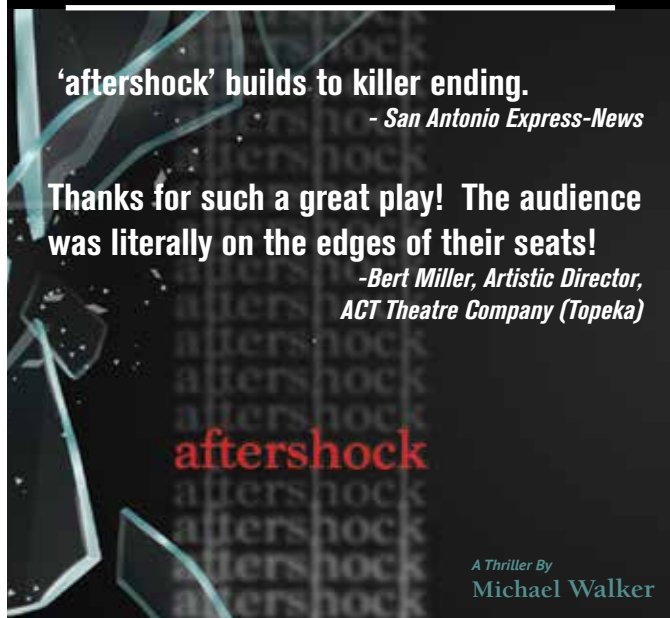
“EDGE OF YOUR SEATS” WALKERPLAYS

‘aftershock’ builds to killer ending.

– San Antonio Express-News

Thanks for such a great play! The audience was literally on the edges of their seats!

– Bert Miller, Artistic Director,
ACT Theatre Company (Topeka)

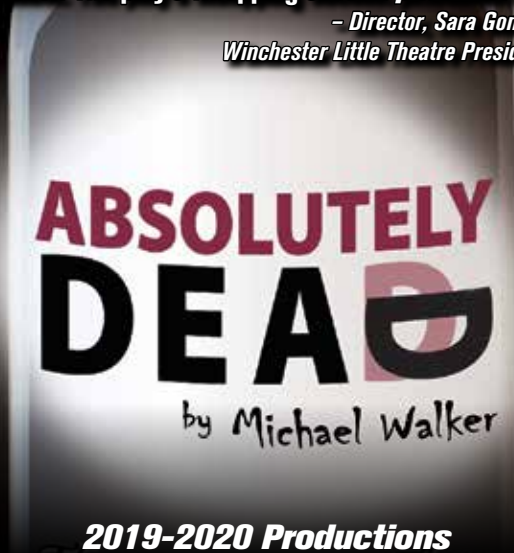


A Thriller By
Michael Walker

FIRST PLACE: International Mystery Writers Festival

“Tickets to Winchester Little Theatre’s production of **ABSOLUTELY DEAD**: \$40. Hosting award-winning playwright Michael Walker at WLT’s opening: a true honor. The play’s whopping success: **priceless!**”

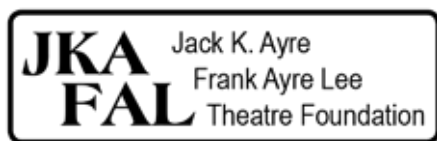
– Director, Sara Gomez,
Winchester Little Theatre President



2019-2020 Productions

March	AFTERSHOCK	Topeka, KS	ACT Theatre Co.
April	ABSOLUTELY DEAD	Pompton Lakes, NJ	Rhino Theatre
May	ABSOLUTELY DEAD	Boylston, MA	Calliope Productions
July	ABSOLUTELY DEAD	Bowie, MD	Bowie Comm Th.
March	LA FIN du SILENCE	2020 Winchester, VA	Winchester Little Th.

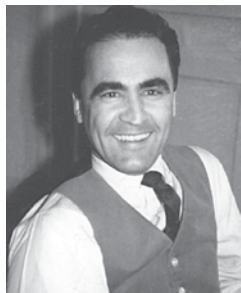
WALKERPLAYS.COM



AACT NewPlayFest 2020 is made possible in part by a grant from the **Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation**, created by the children of Frank Ayre Lee as a tribute to their father, and a legacy for the creative endeavors of his cousin and friend, Jack. The family is pleased to honor both men through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre through AACT NewPlayFest. For more information, visit: aact.org/newplayfest-2020.



Frank Ayre Lee



Jack K. Ayre

Dramatic Publishing Company publishes AACT NewPlayFest's winning plays in anthologies, and also licenses production of the winning plays. Current anthologies include: Volume 1 from the 2014 cycle, with plays by Cece Dwyer, Paul Elliott, Jim Henry, Nedra Roberts, Barry Weinberg and Bo Wilson; Volume 2 from the 2016 cycle, with plays by William Baer, A.J. DeLauder, Jeanne Drennan, Thomas Hischak, Karen L. Lewis, Malcolm MacDonald, and Nedra Pezold Roberts; Volume 3 from the 2018 cycle, with plays by Michael Cochran, Paul Elliott, Denise Hinson, Elaine Liner, Joe Musso, and Rebecca Gorman O'Neill. In addition, *Exit Laughing* by Paul Elliott and *Jellofish* by Jim Henry from the 2014 NewPlayFest cycle, *Wash, Dry, Fold* by Nedra Pezold Roberts from the 2016 NewPlayFest cycle, and *Treehouse* by Joe Musso and *Mynx & Savage* by Rebecca Gorman O'Neill from the 2018 NewPlayFest cycle, are available in acting editions from DPC Visit aact.org/dpc for links to these anthologies and plays, and to learn more about discounts and special offers for AACT members. ♦



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Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati

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-Kenn McLaughlin, Producing Artistic Director, Stages Repertory Theatre

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The world premiere of an award-winning show is a feather in any theatre's cap.

It's also an exciting process, for a theatre that produces a new play is embarking on an artistic adventure that will energize both the company and its patrons.

With that in mind, AACT is now accepting applications for Producing Theatres for the 2022 NewPlayFest, with a deadline of February 1, 2020. For the application form, go to aact.org/new2022, or contact the AACT office.

NewPlayFest 2022 productions will take place between June 2021 and December 2022. Producing Theatres will be chosen well in advance, to allow them time to schedule the world premiere production as part of their regular season.

AACT will select six member theatres to produce the winning plays selected by a team of AACT reviewers. Producing Theatres will read the scripts that make it to the final round and select the winning shows they will produce.

AACT NewPlayFest plays a vital role in many ways. A theatre that produces a world premiere new play contributes to the future development of that piece, and helps the playwright determine what works or doesn't work. The interpretations of the director and the actors can reveal insights into the work that even the playwright didn't know were there, allowing the playwright to determine what can be done to make the play more effective.

To improve the production process, the end product, and the playwriting experience for both theatre and playwright, AACT has added a workshoping component to this festival cycle. This gives each Producing Theatre the opportunity to receive funds specifically for

bringing the playwright to the theatre for workshoping, and to attend the opening night festivities. In addition, funds are also available to help cover production and marketing costs. The Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation will provide this generous funding.

In keeping with AACT's commitment to advancing the artistic quality and creative process for community theatres and artists, winning plays will once again be published in an anthology by Dramatic Publishing Company. ♦

Submit a Script

Playwrights may submit scripts for AACT NewPlayFest 2022 during May and June 2020. Details for script submission will be available soon at aact.org/newplayfest. Only non-musical, full-length plays will be accepted. In addition, scripts must be unpublished and must not have received a full production. (If selected, the AACT theatre's production is to be a world premiere.) Only one script per playwright will be accepted. There are no fees for AACT-member playwrights; nonmembers will be charged a \$10 script processing fee. For more information and script formatting guidelines, visit aact.org/new2022.

Be a Reviewer

Volunteer Reviewers play an important role in AACT NewPlayFest 2020, reading and scoring submitted scripts in several rounds of reviews. If you'd like to be a part of this exciting AACT festival as a Reviewer, you'll find an application form and more information at aact.org/new2022.



Hilarious Comedy Plays!

Murder on the Menu

Murder on the Menu

5 Female, 3 Male | Two Acts
Sophia has been conned into buying a derelict theatre. Now with crushing bank loan payments to make and no money, the jobless Sophia decides to defy the odds and dig her way out of her financial mess by reopening the theatre as a cafe. Her already dire situation worsens, when she soon discovers that the theatre is inhabited by the pompous ghosts of dead Shakespearean characters who are hell bent on keeping their home just as it is. By chance, Sophia discovers that the only way to get rid of the ghosts is to murder them as they were killed in their original plays. At Sophia's cafe, Murder is now on the menu.

Jailhouse Frocks

3 Female, 2 Male | Two Acts
Shattering dimwitted Officer Dwayne's tranquil evening 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 up the gangster leaving Officer Dwayne wondering how on earth he's managed to make the arrest of a lifetime. Featured songs include "Respect" and "Monster Mash".

Also available... The Wedding of the Century, The Supermarket Sisterhood, The Old People Are Revolting, My In-laws are Outlaws, Twas the Fight Before Christmas, How to Train Your Husband... and many more!

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AACT Salutes Veterans

Veterans Day, November 11

Veterans Day honors all of those who have served the country in the United States Armed Forces in war or peace.

AACT honors and thanks the brave men and women who serve and have served our country at home and overseas. We are proud of the partnerships we have built with Army Europe Entertainment to support theatre in the military. We hope that you will take time this Veterans Day to learn more about its history and ways to honor those that served.

Veterans Day was originally called Armistice Day, commemorating the end of World War I.

World War I officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. However, the fighting ended about seven months before that, when the Allies and Germany put into effect an armistice on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

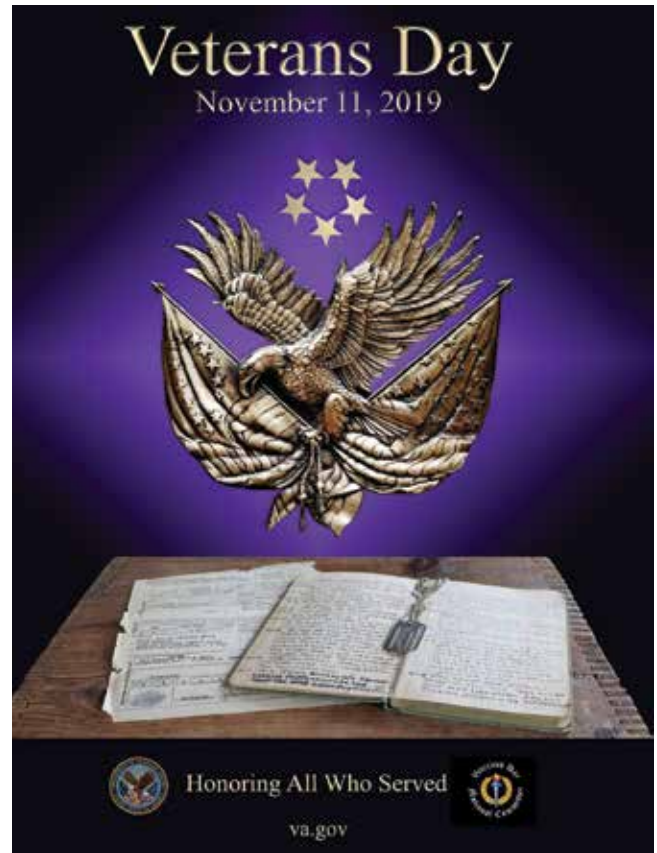
For that reason, Nov. 11, 1918, was largely considered the end of “the war to end all wars” and dubbed Armistice Day. In 1926, Congress officially recognized it as the end of the war, and in 1938, it became an official holiday, primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I.

But then World War II and the Korean War happened, so on June 1, 1954, at the urging of veterans service organizations, Congress amended the commemoration yet again by changing the word “armistice” to “veterans” so the day would honor American veterans of all wars.

This year, the Veterans Day National Ceremony will be held on November 11th at Arlington National Cemetery.

AACT joins in the national salute to all those who have

served in this country's Armed Forces--including AACT members of Army Europe Entertainment, profiled by AACT Region X Representative Dane Winters on the next page. ♦



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

2019 Veterans Day Poster Competition Winner





Army Entertainment - What? How? Why?

Dane Winters

Laurie Chavez

When I packed my bags to begin working with Army Europe Entertainment, fellow actors (and my agent in the States) first wondered what Army Entertainment *was*; then, what on earth would I be doing; and, finally, why would I do so.

As a callow young actor, I simply thought of it as a great way to take a short, needed break from acting, and experience life in Europe. However, my “one year” European adventure has become a 33-year career with a program I’ve grown to whole-heartedly believe in and fight for.

To answer the first question, Army Entertainment was founded in 1940 by the U.S. War Department. Army Entertainment once spanned the globe. In 1976, *The Washington Post* named the program “the largest producing organization of music and theatre in the world,” staging more than 25,000 performances annually, with a global audience of more than 2.5 million people.

As with the rest of the world, much has changed since then. Only seven Entertainment programs remain today, located in Germany, Italy, and Belgium. At each, one or two professionals

Many of you will agree, I think, regardless of location, producing theatre is very much like a military exercise

run community theatre-style programs, supported by thousands of soldier, family member, and civilian volunteers. It remains the only Army Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation program that functions with volunteer support. Annually, more than 2,000 volunteers provide hundreds of thousands of hours, putting on shows, which equates to over \$3 million in volunteerism given to European military communities.



CW5 Mark Duplessie (left) as Smee, CPT Andrew Tebvand (right) as Captain Hook, and civilians in the cast rehearse Peter Pan JR at Terrace Playhouse in Ansbach, Germany. Terrace Playhouse provides community members with the exciting opportunity to develop and maintain their skills in all aspects of the performing arts and gives the Ansbach Community a wide variety of award winning, high quality, live performances.

The mission and history of Army Entertainment can be found at ArmyEuropeEntertainment.com. I recommend checking it out—it is a fascinating story.

As for the second question about what we do, we are simply doing theatre, but in a foreign land. Many of you will agree, I think, regardless of location, producing theatre is very much like a military exercise. As Alan Buxkemper, Stuttgart Theatre Center Director and fellow 32-year Entertainment vet puts it, “Auditions are our ‘Draft,’ if you will. Rehearsals are ‘Basic Training,’ dress rehearsals are ‘Maneuver Exercises,” and performances are ‘Combat.’ (Hopefully, lethality is kept to a minimum, though!)”

A show brings together people with wildly different levels of experience, talent, skill, and age in pursuit of a common goal—or mission. Buxkemper continues, “You create a battle plan, train like crazy, and then pull it off seamlessly with no apparent effort. Sounds like theatre, doesn’t it?”

As to concerned friends’ (and my agent’s) final question, “Why on earth” would I leave a career and stay 33 years? The

continued on next page ►

reason my colleagues and I devote our professional lives to this program is because we have seen, first-hand, the impact that theatre has on soldiers, civilians, and family members, not to mention an entire community.

We have testimonials from soldiers (some suffering from PTSD), emphatically stating the program saved their minds, careers, marriages, families, and lives. Some of those soldiers and family members have gone on to life-long theatre avocations or even professional careers—including a Tony Award-winner.

"Parents, children, and often entire families develop new bonds and increase closeness by working on a show."

Vikki Hanrahan, another 30+ year Entertainment Director, at Ansbach's Terrace Playhouse says, "Soldiers find a safe, nurturing, and creative environment where they can briefly escape the daily stress of military service. They discover alternatives to negative behaviors like drinking, drugs, and endless video games in the barracks. Their sense of isolation in a foreign country decreases. They find friends, and often 'families,' to take the place of the ones they left behind."

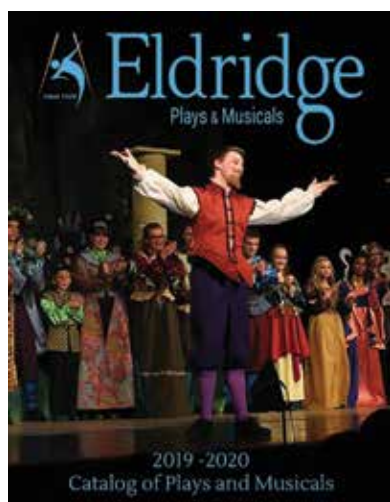
Among the biggest beneficiaries of Army Entertainment are youth and families. As Jerry Brees, director of the Soldiers Theatre in Vicenza, Italy, explains, "Parents, children, and often entire families develop new bonds and increase closeness by working on a show. Many U.S. military schools in Europe don't have theatre programs. Our theatres fill a vital gap in youths'

education and experience. Kids interact with a wide variety of ages and backgrounds while growing stronger emotionally, and becoming more self-confident. And parents know they are in a safe place."

Brees emphasizes that "Soldiers and families can't simply walk off base and find an English-speaking theatre to visit or be part of. We provide something important they were each sacrificing in order to serve our country overseas."

As with any arts organization, especially in today's environment, the sword of Damocles hovers in the budgetary wings. However, my fellow Army Entertainment Directors and I are committed to continuing the 70-year-old mission to support soldiers, families, and youth the best way we know how—creating community by putting on theatre. ♦

Dane Winters is the IMCOM (Installation Management Command Europe) Entertainment Program Manager. He received his MFA in Acting/Design at the Dallas Theater Center from Trinity University in 1984. In 1986, Dane moved to Bamberg, Germany as a U.S. Army Entertainment Music Specialist. He went on to serve as the Stuttgart Theater Center Director from 1988–1998, the Stuttgart Entertainment Branch Director from 1998–2000, and Entertainment Director at the Heidelberg Roadside Theater from 2000–2012. Dane became the Europe Region Program Manager in 2012, is located in Kaiserslautern, Germany, and oversees and supports military theatres across Europe. Dane received numerous TOPPER Awards (U.S. Army Entertainment Europe Tournament of Plays) and U.S. Army Festival of the Arts Awards for his directing, design, and technical direction. He has received the AACT David Bryant Outstanding Service Award, the U.S. Army James T. Martin Award for life-time service, and numerous U.S. Army commendations.



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National Awards Nominations Open November 4

AACT National Awards are presented each year in recognition of outstanding contributions to community theatre. The 2020 National Awards will be presented at aactWorldFest 2020 in Venice, Florida, in June. Nominations open November 4 and are accepted for persons of all ages. The submission deadline is *January 20, 2020*.

Visit aact.org/national-awards to submit a nomination. The same page also offers a list of AACT National Awards with descriptions, links to see who has received Awards in the past, and a link to the National Award Nomination Form.

Spotlight Award Nominations

Nominations are welcome anytime for the AACT Spotlight Award, which is presented locally by AACT and an AACT-member theatre in recognition 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. ♦

Paola Noguera



Chris Serface, Tacoma (WA) Little Theatre Managing Artistic Director, received the Shining Star Award in 2019



Paola Noguera

Eugene Irby from Artesia, New Mexico receives the 2019 David C Bryant Outstanding Service Award from AACT Board member Kristofer Geddie at the AACT Annual National Award Ceremony held during AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

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aact WORLDVEST

A resort city on the Gulf of Mexico, with a population of only 25,000, it's located mostly on Venice Island, across one of three bridges from the mainland. Dozens of restaurants, bars, and shops await you.

You won't want to stay inside, though. Venice's sandy beaches are just a 15-minute walk from the festival theatre. Stroll along a new and improved Venice Avenue—lined with palm trees and banyan trees—to one of Florida's most beautiful beaches. The sun may be hot, but you'll enjoy the cool Gulf breeze as you walk.

Old Florida rivers and creeks are just a few miles away. On a boat ride down the Myakka River you will most likely encounter alligators and manatees along the way.

If you're a golfer, there are many courses to choose from, including the championship Plantation Golf and Country Club courses, where the Ladies PGA Q-school tournament is held. Deep-sea fishing, canoeing, kayaking, parasailing, biking, and bird watching are also popular pastimes in this paradise on the Gulf.



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The "Shark Tooth Capital of the World," Venice, Florida, is known for its spectacular white-sanded Gulf Coast shoreline. Venice offers 14 miles of beaches from Casey Key to Manasota Key and plenty of recreational opportunities, including swimming, sunbathing, fishing, and boating. Shelling is also a favorite pastime in Venice, and fossilized shark's teeth can be found in abundance by sifting through the sand.

While at the beach, you can experience something unique to Venice—it's the Shark Tooth Capital of the World! Due to the Gulf Stream and its oddities, most of the world's fossilized sharks' teeth wash up onto the Venice-area beaches. A popular low-tide pastime is hunting and collecting a wide variety of these teeth, and making them into ornamental items, such as necklaces and bracelets.

Clearly, you'll find lots to do in Venice. And just north is Sarasota, consistently hailed as one of the nation's top-five cities for the arts, with a wide variety of local theatre, Broadway shows, ballet, and orchestra performances, art galleries, and local flavor (such as the world-famous Selby Botanical Gardens, the Ringling Art Museum, and Historic Spanish Point) to enjoy.

But wait—there's more! Tampa Bay Rays major league baseball games are just an hour away, and Busch Gardens Amusement Park and Zoological Gardens are 75 minutes away. If you're a Disney fan, one more hour will get you to Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, and SeaWorld. You can also drive to the Florida Everglades, Kennedy Space Center, and much, much more.

Come to aactWorldFest early, and stay a few days after. Enjoy all of Florida, the Sunshine State! You'll be glad you did.

Festival registration and more information about the area is available online at venicetheatre.org/international/. ♦



Stroll down Venice Avenue with its pink, Italian Renaissance buildings, Mediterranean-style shops and "umbrella-topped" Canary Island date palms. Dozens of restaurants, bars, and shops await you. The shops are as eclectic as the restaurants, and they all look forward to serving you!

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End-of -Year Giving: Tell Your Story!

Kristi Quinn

Thanksgiving? Christmas? Hanukkah? Kwanzaa? All are coming sooner than you would like to believe. And for those of us in the nonprofit world, year-end holiday time means fundraising. Or it used to. With new tax laws, the year-end plea has taken on a whole new complexion. Many organizations are opting out of the year-end request, and trying new approaches. However, you shouldn't give this tried-and-true method a pass without serious consideration. The year-end campaign can bring you closer to your donors, but you must start planning now.

During the mellow holiday season, full of good cheer, you have the perfect opportunity to tell your organization's story. Patrons want and need to know what you have done with donations—and being in the theatre business, nobody can tell a story like you. Your story should focus on your theatre's mission and how the donor's contribution can help make that mission

a reality. Pictures and videos on social media can reaffirm a donor's belief in your theatre, while new patrons are introduced to current or upcoming projects and programs.

Telling your story can be as easy as a postcard highlighting achievements, ongoing programs, or discussing future planning, or an open house prior to your holiday production. Tell donors how much they mean to the organization, and remind them they are part of the story of the theatre. Their commitment to your organization is what puts "community" into community theatre.

Donor relationships are the cornerstone of effective fundraising, and holidays create a perfect time for building, stabilizing, or beginning those relationship through the stories you are telling.

No matter the size of the organization, a development plan is essential, and part of the plan should be the end-of-the-year campaign goal. Setting a goal helps you measure and achieve success. Keep donors in the loop, and you create energy and maintain excitement as you move toward your goal.

Never forget that giving is personal, not a tax benefit. However, note that, due to recent tax law changes, donors may choose to give to you differently than before.

First, determine who you are going to target for your campaign. Because you have set a goal, you should be able to determine who best will benefit from your "theatre story." For example, if you are looking to renovate theatre classrooms, the target of your messaging would be past students and parents of current ones.

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Once you've determined your targets, set up a campaign calendar. By determining a beginning and ending date for the year-end request, you can plan mailings, social media, and marketing. Because you know your target audience, how you reach them is easier to define. Many communities are tying into "Giving Tuesday" and other "Big Give" funding mechanisms. If these are available to you, do not hesitate to jump on the band wagon—they can help you set up your campaign timetable.

Plan for what happens
after December 31.
How are you going
to continue the
momentum?

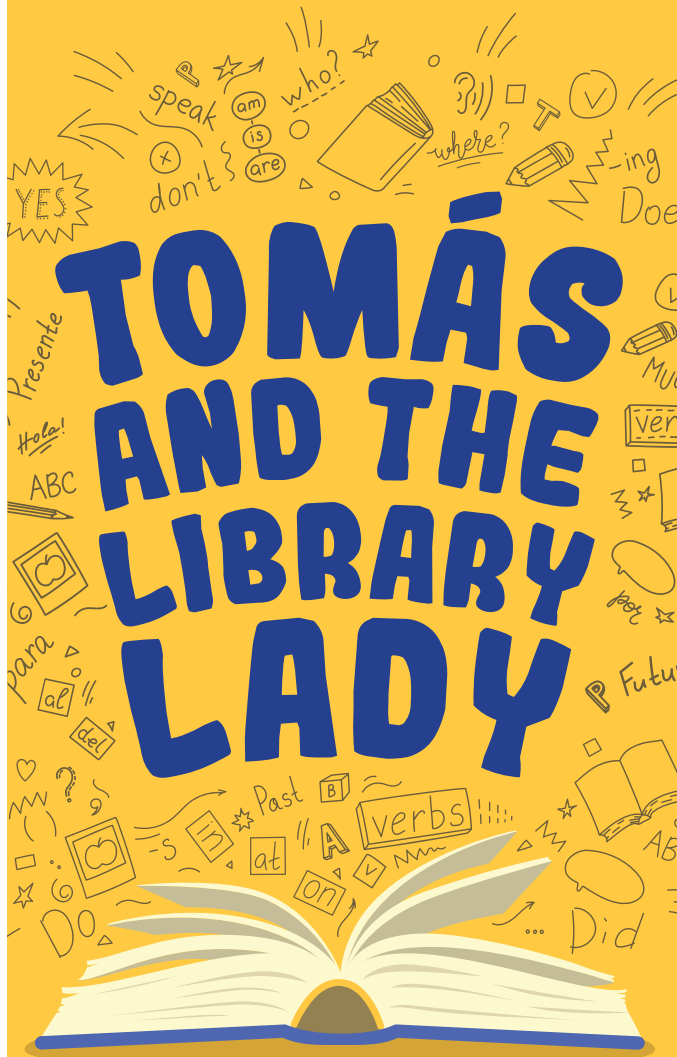
Never forget that giving is personal, not a tax benefit. However, note that, due to recent tax law changes, donors may choose to give to you differently than before. You may find some want to give a larger amount at one time that would otherwise represent several years' donation. For example, Mr. Donorman gives you \$5,000, instead of his usual \$1,000 gift—but, for the next four years he will not donate. This enables him to take an itemized tax deduction. Understanding how the tax laws will affect you, and treating donors in a consistent manner, is key to maintaining an even keel while negotiating these often uncharted waters.

Finally, plan for what happens after December 31. How are you going to continue the momentum? Go back to your development plan and assess the success and failure of your goals and objectives. Remember your development plan is about *development*: Developing your relationships with donors, developing your relationships with the community, developing staff and volunteer, and developing the image your theatre projects.

Through strong relationships and captivating stories, you *will* be successful. ♦

Kristi Quinn has been active in community theatre for over twenty years. Formerly the AACT VP Festivals, Kristi served for six years as the Region V Representative on the AACT Board. She serves as a member of the Finance and Advocacy Committees of AACT. She also served as a board member of the Nebraska Association of Community Theatre. Her theatre experience includes acting, directing, set decoration, and costume design, as well as public relations, grant writing, and development. She has been employed as Executive Director of the Sioux City Community Theatre, Development Director of the Sioux City Art Center, and Executive Director of Susan G. Komen Siouxland. Kristi resides in Dakota City, Nebraska.

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AACTFest 2021 Is on the Horizon

Mark your calendar for June 14-19, 2021—the dates for AACTFest 2021, AACT's national theatre festival.

The location is downtown Louisville, Kentucky, with AACTFest National Companies performing at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts. This state-of-the-art theatre

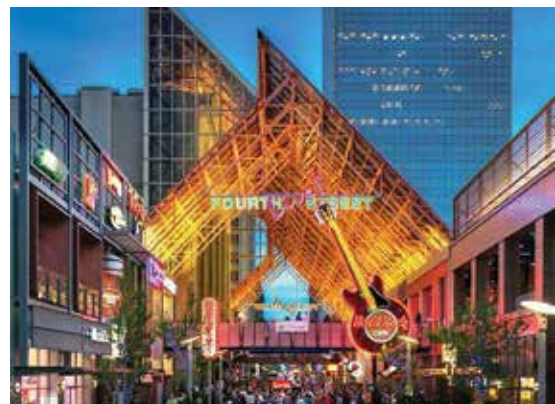
well as a host of community theatres and the Kentucky Center Presents performances. The Center's three theatres, along with their sister facility, the elegant W. L. Lyons Brown Theatre, are Kentucky's showcases for the performing arts. From Broadway to ballet, from blues to bluegrass, from big bands to Beethoven, these stages overflow with magnificent entertainment almost every night of the year.

The Hyatt Regency Downtown will serve as the festival host hotel, with special discounted rates available to festival attendees. It will also will be the location for AACTFest special events, workshops, exhibits, and conferences. This 4-star hotel is within walking distance of Actors Theatre of Louisville and the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts. With a stay at Hyatt Regency Louisville, you will be centrally located in Louisville and just steps from the Fourth Street Live District. A trolley



The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts

center is home to Louisville's nationally-renowned arts scene, including the Louisville Orchestra, Kentucky Opera, Louisville Ballet, Stage One Family Theatre, and PNC Bank Broadway, as



Louisville's Fourth Street Live District



will be available to transport those staying at the hotel to the festival theatre. Additional host hotels will be announced soon. Please consider staying at one of the designated host hotels, as this makes it possible for AACT to provide the great discounts, services, and experiences offered during the festival.

AACT is excited to be hosting the next festival in such a vibrant and arts-friendly city with world-class restaurants, tourist attractions and museums, dozens of venues and performance companies, and rich in history! More information about the festival will be posted on the AACT website soon (aact.org/21).

Want to Perform at AACTFest 2021? For groups wanting to perform in 2021, we recommend that you start planning *now* to participate and get involved in your state's AACTFest qualifying festival. Each state is different. Some may function on an annual basis, while others function on a biennial cycle. For more information about your state festival, please contact your state contact, listed at aact.org/statecontacts and/or your Regional Representative at aact.org/regionreps.

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AACT National Community Theatre Directors Conference 2019

November 15-17, 2019
University of Wisconsin–Madison

The 20th biennial National Community Theatre Directors Conference, on the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, attracted such a robust number of attendees that registrations were closed in early October. This reflects “the highest registration numbers on record,” according to AACT Executive Director Quiana Clark-Roland.

The three-day conference brings together those employed full-time in an administrative and/or artistic position in a community theatre. Attendees learn about other’s theatre operations, share stories of challenges and solutions, and meet and create lasting collaborations with colleagues from around the country.

“The value of this conference is tremendous,” says Jon Douglas Rake, of the Tacoma Musical Playhouse in Tacoma, Washington. “Theatre managers share challenges from their home theatres, and issues range from boards of directors and staff to production values, marketing, facility, ticket pricing, and volunteers. Managers from small-scale theatres as well as multi-million-dollar budget theatres attend. It is a place to share and a place to learn. It is also a place to catch up on friendships.”

This year, for the first time, the conference is open to observers

Sarah Phoenix, Artistic Director of Theatre Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma, agrees: “The most important part of attending the conference is talking to others who do what I do, and who understand the unique nature of our roles. We build relationships of friendship, support, and networking, and meet people who are willing to provide advice with productions and help trouble-shoot problems.”



Geoff Leonard-Robinson

John Viars, facilitator of the National Community Theatre Directors Conference, enjoys the active participation of all participants as they share their variety of experiences, November, 2017

This year, for the first time, the conference is open to observers—those not in a full-time administrative or artistic position. Observers have access to all meals, social events, and resources shared during the conference. And while participation in discussions is limited to those registered as full-time directors (unless facilitators warrant otherwise), observing is seen as an opportunity to learn from the discussions and networking opportunities.

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John Viars

The conference once again benefits from the seasoned facilitation of John Viars, who has served in that role for three decades. He is the recently retired Executive Director of the Des Moines Playhouse, and a past president of AACT. A recipient of international achievement, outstanding service, and lifetime achievement awards, John has been employed professionally in community and educational theatre for over 45 years. He holds both a BA and MA in

theatre from Case Western Reserve University.

The conference, produced by AACT, and sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is being held at its original home at the Lowell Center on the UW-Madison campus. Registration included an opening night reception, all conference materials, lunches for two days, and the MTI-sponsored Cocktail Hour and Trivia Game.

The biennial Conference will be held again in November 2021. Details will be available at aact.org/ctdc. Dates and location to be announced. We recommend registering early, as the conference continues to be more and more popular. ♦

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Sharing the Tools to Succeed AACT TEAMS Conference 2019

Casey Wayne Soelberg

I can still recall—vividly—the board meeting where I pleaded to abolish our theatre’s misuse of cartoon clip-art advertising and questionable graphics (Getty Images watermarks, and all).

Such tales of marketing mayhem weren’t lost on my fellow attendees at the AACT TEAMS Conference at the Hale Theatre in Salt Lake City this past August. We’d all been there at some point in our careers. And now we were here in Salt Lake—and thankfully. After all, where else could we collaborate as like-minded thespians and theatre geeks? Who else could comprehend the frustrations that sometimes fester from the true grit of community theatre? And how do we reach younger demographics more effectively?

I currently serve as the Media and Public Relations Director for the Actors’ Repertory Theatre of Idaho in Idaho Falls, Idaho (indeed, that’s a lot of Idaho). I went to the TEAMS Conference (along with my Board Vice President, Megan Gazda), for a revitalizing three-day quest for community theatre marketing and development skills.

Joining us was an all-American gaggle of theatre representatives from Iowa, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Oregon, New England, Idaho and Texas—all with a yearning for learning. Once conversations began to flow, the relatability among us was uncanny.

In my case, within the Marketing Track (see more about tracks below), we shared tales of long-winded pre-curtain speeches, impossible-to-please patrons, decreasing volunteer retention rates, ROI’s, failed dynamic pricing, and the inevitable late program bio from that one cast member. Yes Bubba, we’ve all been there.

More importantly, we shared innovative marketing strategies with one another that would impress any Mark Cubans of our generation. We talked about award ceremonies for volunteers, parties to nominate unforgettable faux pas of the season, membership tiers for patrons, press nights, drink pre-orders, and 30-second introduction videos to replace those pre-curtain speeches we’d all been venting about. These were the proper tools to counteract any community theatre marketing mishaps.



David Cockrell

Lee Ann Barkos, Marketing and Public Relations Director at Des Moines Community Playhouse, leads the TEAMS 2019 Marketing/Development Track as they discuss how to build audiences, and to use marketing and branding in today’s changing social media world

People here *understand*. They *know*. I found the unanimous synergism everywhere at the AACT TEAMS Conference was like the goosebumps you feel when you hear your favorite song, or watch a performance you’ve been waiting your entire adult life to see. It doesn’t get much better than that.



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The AACT TEAMS Conference is a multi-tracked program, and I found that my experience was repeated for attendees in each category represented by the TEAMS acronym, as explained by AACT:

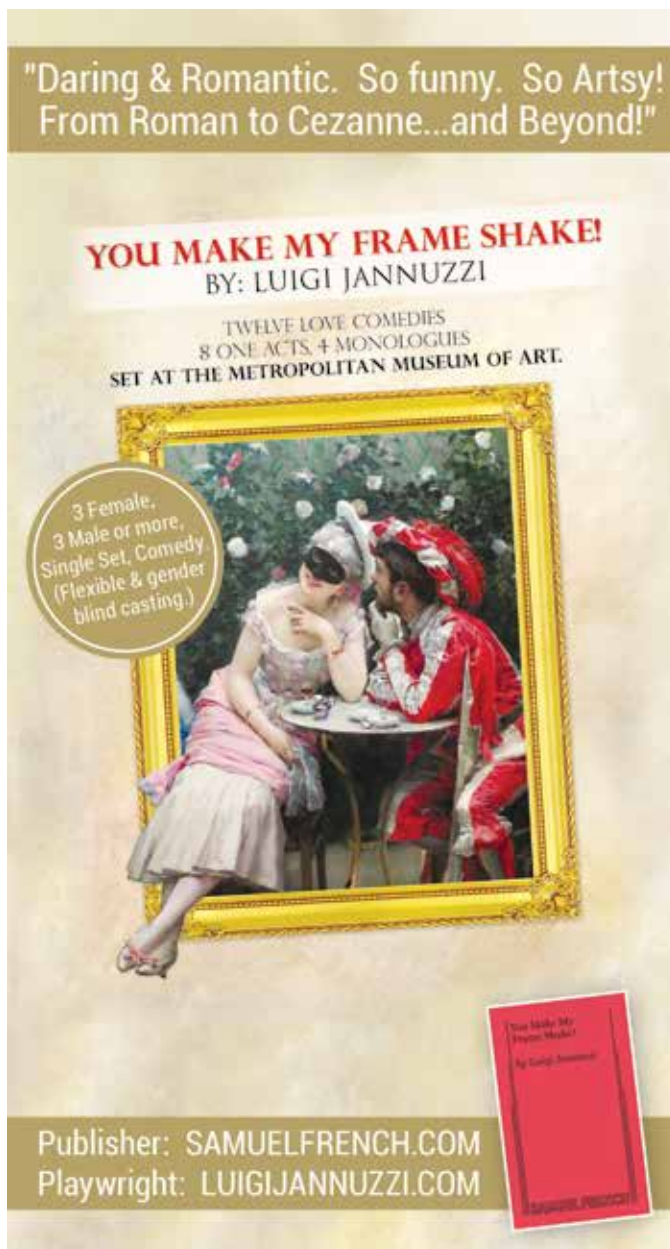
1. **Theatrical Theatre** – “Learn to master the challenges you face as you work within the amenities of your theatre, from stage size, lighting systems, and scenery, to costumes.”
2. **Educational Programming** – “The Educational Programming track will give you skills to tackle theatre education issues, a renewed enthusiasm to build your educational programs, and provide you with a network of colleagues from all over the country.”
3. **Artistic Direction/Vision** – “Choose the right plays for your next season; learn solutions for choosing directors, recruiting actors, and solving technical problems; and examine long-range planning.”

4. **Marketing/Development Skills** – “Discover strategies and tactics to increase your fundraising and marketing abilities, and learn ways to create loyalty to your organization and promote its place in your community.”

5. **Stage Management Skills** – “For new and experienced stage managers, and those who are interested in taking on that important role, as well as directors, producers, or volunteer coordinators looking to establish or improve their theatre’s stage management program.”

Note that each track is its own three-day course, taught separately from the rest. Consequentially, attending more than one track would require multiple representatives from your organization, or waiting until the next year to take part in other portions of the conference yourself. Either way, it’s worth it. My only frustration was not being able to attend all of them at the same time.

continued on next page ►



Ultimately, I found that sharing stories, problems, and solutions made for a memorable and mind-stretching experience. The TEAMS Conference helped us all to unravel the underlying messages within our shared experiences—and the potential for growth they contain. We came away equipped with the tools to succeed—with the help of the right people, a positive attitude, and a complete absence of watermarked cartoon clip-art. ♦

Casey Wayne Soelberg is the Media & Public Relations Director for the Actors' Repertory Theatre of Idaho in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He graduated from Idaho State University with an emphasis in journalism, which he currently uses to freelance professionally and recreationally. His entertainment background involves film and theatrical acting in over nine productions in the past three years.

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Spotlight Award Honors Dan Sheehan

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.

The Walpole (MA) Footlighters honored **Daniel Sheehan** with the AACT Spotlight Award, on Sunday, June 9, 2019. The award was presented by Board Member Marianne Phinney at The Footlighters' annual meeting.

Dan Sheehan joined The Walpole Footlighters in 1990, and has served as Technical Director for over 20 years. His many talents include set, sound, and lighting design, as well as stage "gimmicks." Dan is the theatre's go-to guy for almost everything, one who signs his bio as: "Fixer of Things that Break." When a challenge arises, Dan always finds a clever and practical solution.



Walpole Footlighters

Daniel Sheehan receives the Spotlight Award from Walpole Footlighters Board member Marianne Phinney

His creativity and technical expertise have enabled The Walpole Footlighters to stage technically difficult shows, like *Something's Afoot*, with 10 "lethal" gimmicks, *Flemming*, with multiple concealed entrances, and *Blithe Spirit*, featuring a center-stage dancing armchair. Dan accommodates any of the backstage, last minute, or on-the-spot needs of the cast and stage crew. The Footlighters depend on Dan to make things right, and help its production teams achieve their artistic vision.

As stated in the theatre's newsletter, "Dan's attention to detail creates a 'world' on the stage, wowing both actors and the audience." ♦

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The New Hampshire Community Theatre Association (NHCTA) held the 2019 New Hampshire Community Theatre Festival in Rochester, New Hampshire on September 21, 2019. Pictured (left to right) adjudicator Kelly Morgan, AACT Region I Representative Bevie Lord, adjudicator Lowell Williams, festival organizer Joe Pelonsi, and NHCTA President Chuck Emmons



Debbie Litch (center), Theatre Memphis Executive Producer, was presented the AACT Distinguished Merit Award by AACT Region IV Representative Lynn Nelson (right) and Theatre Memphis Board President Dabney Coors (left) on August 4, 2019 during a volunteer appreciation banquet where the theatre was also announcing a major renovation initiative (thus the hard hat and tool belt!)

New Play Contest

The Robert J. Pickering Award for Playwriting Excellence

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.

Types of plays accepted:

Full length, unproduced plays and musicals. Children's plays accepted.

Branch County Community Theatre (BCCT) 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.

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

BCCT productions are staged in the historic Tibbits Opera House in Coldwater, Michigan. Built in 1882, Tibbits is a completely restored 500-seat proscenium theater.

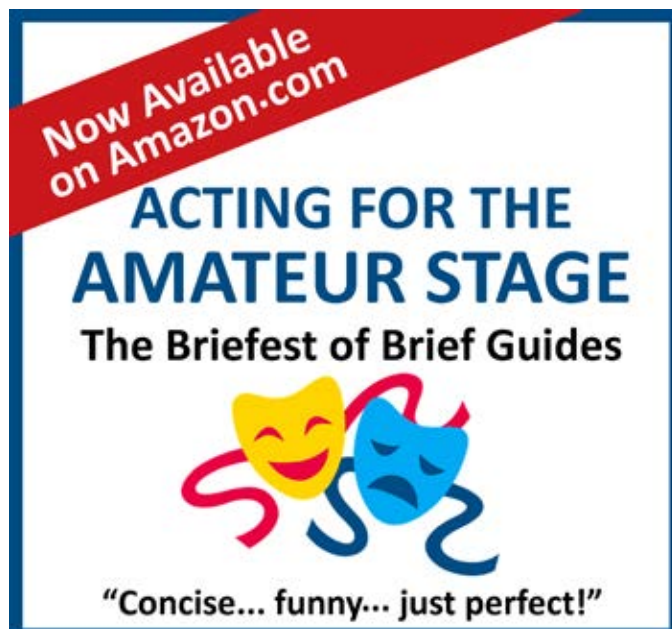
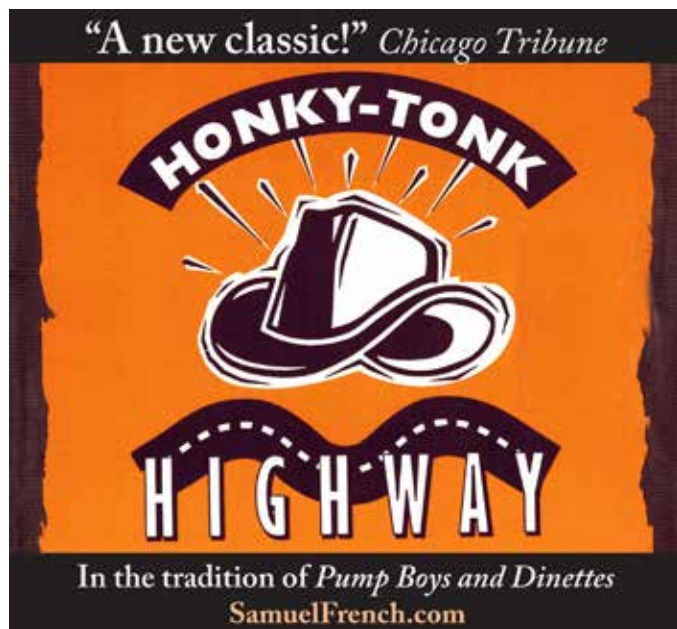
Deadline: December 31, 2019

Send submissions to:

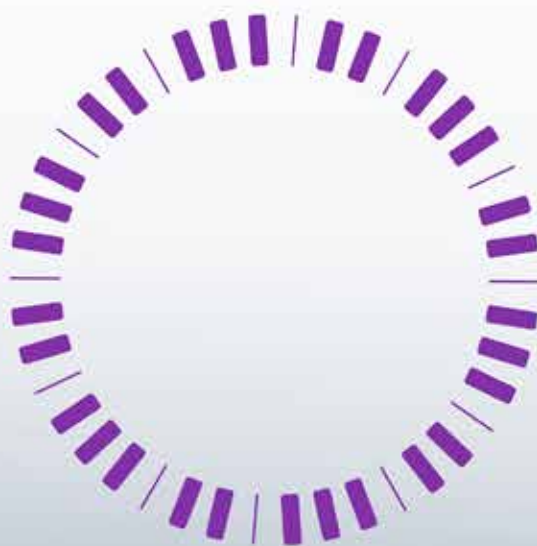
Branch County Community Theatre
14 S. Hanchett St.
Coldwater, MI 49036

branchcct.org/pickering

For More New Play Contests see aact.org/contests



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Southeastern Theatre Conference
70th Annual Convention
 Feb. 26 – March 1, 2020
 Louisville, Kentucky

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 5,000 members of our theatre community together for three and a half days of workshops, keynotes, performance festivals, auditions, college recruiting, job interviews, and more.

Early-Bird Registration Deadline: Dec. 13, 2019 @ Noon ET

Online Registration Deadline: Jan. 22, 2020 @ Noon ET

As part of the convention, each year, the **Ten-Minute Play Festival** is open to all SETC Convention attendees, no matter age or

Listings do not imply AACT endorsement

affiliation. All you have to do is apply and be ready to create and produce a production within 24 hours. 2020 applications will be available as part of the online convention registration process.

How the Ten-Minute Play Festival Works:

- Actors perform audition monologues
- Playwrights work throughout the night to create their plays
- The next morning, directors select a completed script and choose the actors
- Groups work together to rehearse and stage their plays

The Ten-Minute Play Festival culminates in an evening of public performances followed by a response session.

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

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

setc.org/convention/

Artie's Advocacy Tip

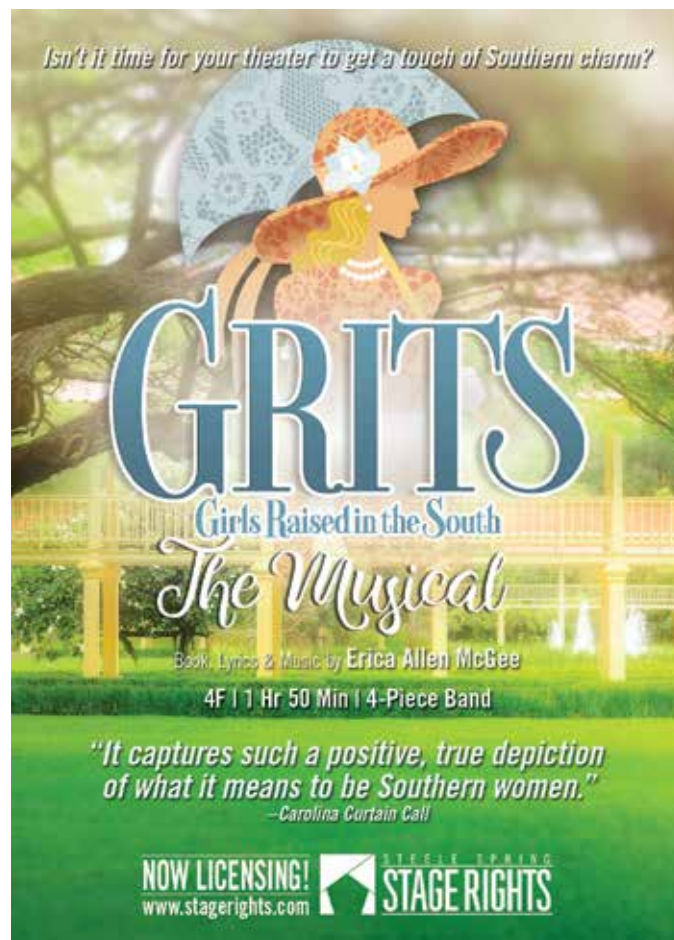
Advocacy is educating and informing elected officials, the public, and the media about the importance and value of your community theatre.

Officeholders have a lot of responsibility and tackle a wide variety of legislative issues. Many never consider going to a local performance or meeting with arts organization officials.

Introduce your organization to elected officials

- Communicate your interest in working together in the future, typically with a short written letter.
- Submit a packet of organizational materials: brief background information (include your mission statement), season brochure, promotional poster, and calendar. Include outreach and educational programs, economic impact studies, fact sheets on relevant issues, newsletters, etc. Update this packet once a year.
- Place the legislator on your press list, and get on his/her press list
- Request a meeting at the legislator's office to discuss your organization, its current situation, future plans, and issues of concern.

It is up to you—performing artists, administrators, and audience members—to explain the value of the performing arts to lawmakers.





Happy Holidays from Your Insurance Friends

Grice King

I know that some of you out there don't really know us very well. After all, we are fairly new to AACT. But we're not new to insurance, not new to business, and definitely not new to theatre. My wife, kids, father-in-law (Ken Roberts with USI), mother-in-law, and my mother when she was younger, all have participated in community theatre. As for me, I am not much of a performer, and am genuinely terrified at the thought of being on stage in front of large groups (My palms and forehead suddenly got a bit clammy just thinking about it.) That's why I can't tell you enough just how much I respect those of you who *do* perform.

In our small community of Gainesville, Texas, we have two great venues for theatre. One is Butterfield Stage, which has presented about every major theatrical production for adults and children in its 40 years. The other is North Central Texas College (NCTC), whose drama department puts on regular performances in its newly-built performing arts center. Earlier in June, my wife, Nikki, was in the NCTC production of *Little Shop of Horrors*. It was her NCTC debut, so this was an exciting experience for her and our family. She played a Skid Row urchin, a radio interviewer, and the fabulous Mrs. Luce. She even got to ride a bike across stage!

Grice King



Nikki King (right) as Mrs. Luce in the North Central Texas College production of *Little Shop of Horrors*

Our daughters were fascinated by the show and wanted to figure out all the nuances behind productions of that scale. Our youngest, who is six, bebopped around the house singing "They say the meek shall inherit..." for weeks, and it escalated from there. All three of our girls went to multiple performances, and will definitely be future thespians. The boys are harder to figure out, as young boys are, but they walked away from the show grinning from ear to ear. As for me, I am amazed



Grice King

The King family enjoys time onstage with Audrey 2 at the North Central Texas College production of *Little Shop of Horrors*

how well a show like this can come together. It was a wonderful performance, Nikki's stage presence was awe-inspiring, and our kids even got to take pictures with the infamous Audrey 2!

Theatre is so much fun, as you all know, but every time I watch one of these fabulous performances, I am reminded just how much work from everyone goes into making us laugh, cry, or sit up straight in our seat.

I wish everyone the happiest of holidays from my family to yours. Break a leg out there, and continue to make millions of people happy across this great country. ♦

Only King Insurance Group handles the
AACT Insurance Program.

For more information contact:
King Insurance Group
Grice King
grice@kinggroup.us
940-612-1300

AACT Web Power

If your theatre plans to file for federal nonprofit status—or if you simply want to brush up on nonprofit law and regulations—there's no better place to begin than the AACT website.

You'll find a step-by-step explanation of the process, how to begin, and how to create a successful application. There's further help with links to specific IRS publications and forms, an overview of filing requirements, and information on developing or updating your organization's articles of incorporation, bylaws, and other documents you may need to provide.

The process may be complex, but the information provided on the AACT website will get you started in the right direction, so there are fewer surprises, and more certainty of a successful application. Visit aact.org/nonprofit (or, on the site's drop-down menu, go to Making Theatre, then Management).

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

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Nov 14-16	National Community Theatre Directors Conference American Association of Community Theatre	WI Madison	817-732-3177 opt 2 aact.org

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

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