spotlight

July/August 2020 \$5.00

american association of community theatre



Fundraising... Now? Yes!

AACT Webinars

#wearetheatre

COVID-19 Resources

AACTFest 2021

4 Tips Before You Stream



"IRRESISTIBLE!"
The New York Times

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Los Angeles Times

"PURE DELIGHT! A MAJOR CROWD-PLEASER.

-Tom McCoy, Exec. Producer, McCoy Rigby Entertainment "TREMENDOUS!"
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Produce the original Off-Broadway hit or one of these delightful sequels:





















Rick Kerby AACT President

It's been an honor and privilege to serve as President of AACT over the past year, and you'll have a new President to guide you, as of June 6. I don't have to tell you that they will inherit a sound organizational structure, and a huge reservoir of talent and good-will from our staff, and from you. They will also face incredible challenges.

When I assumed office, nobody (least of all yours truly) would have predicted that six months later, we would be facing the worst pandemic in 100 years—disrupting our routines, endangering our livelihoods, and derailing in-person performances as we have known them all our lives. And I'm not just talking about the obvious challenges to actors and audiences. Consider how many others have been affected, from the box office to the printers, from ticket-takers to the crew, from musicians to volunteers ... the ripple effect seems endless.

What is most important now, however, is the future. We can, and must, use our collective creativity to bring order out of this chaos, find ways to go forward, and work to make theatre even more relevant and important than it has ever been.

Let me put on my Producing Artistic Director's hat for a moment, and give you just a short sampling of what I was doing for *my* theatre during my recent quarantine:

- Reading new plays
- Conducting innumerable Zoom calls with other theatre managers and directors

- Brainstorming with financial advisors to figure out ways to keep employees sane, paid, and the doors open
- Looking at live-stream alternatives
- Rescheduling upcoming events
- Reassuring donors, patrons, and parents of "kid camp" hopefuls who are concerned about safety and the continuation of our programs
- Applying for, and sharing experiences about, Paycheck Protection Program loans
- Strategizing about social distancing and health concerns in our facility.

I know I'm not alone in this flurry of activity. Community theatres across the country have been working hard on some or all of these things. Because we must.

None of us know exactly what tomorrow will look like, but a future without theatre is incomprehensible—and simply unacceptable. And despite the challenges, we will prevail.





July/August 2020

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Don't miss out on any of the exciting activities and benefits of AACT membership for 2020-2021! Monthly payment plans are available

On the Cover

Ghost lights have replaced live productions on stages across the country due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Meijer Majestic Theatre at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre and School of Theatre Arts in Grand Rapids, Michigan closed in March and all that has remained is a ghost light along with various props and set dressings

Photo: Mary Jo DeNolf, Director of Volunteers and Operations at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre

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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.



Post photos on Instagram



Find AACT on Facebook



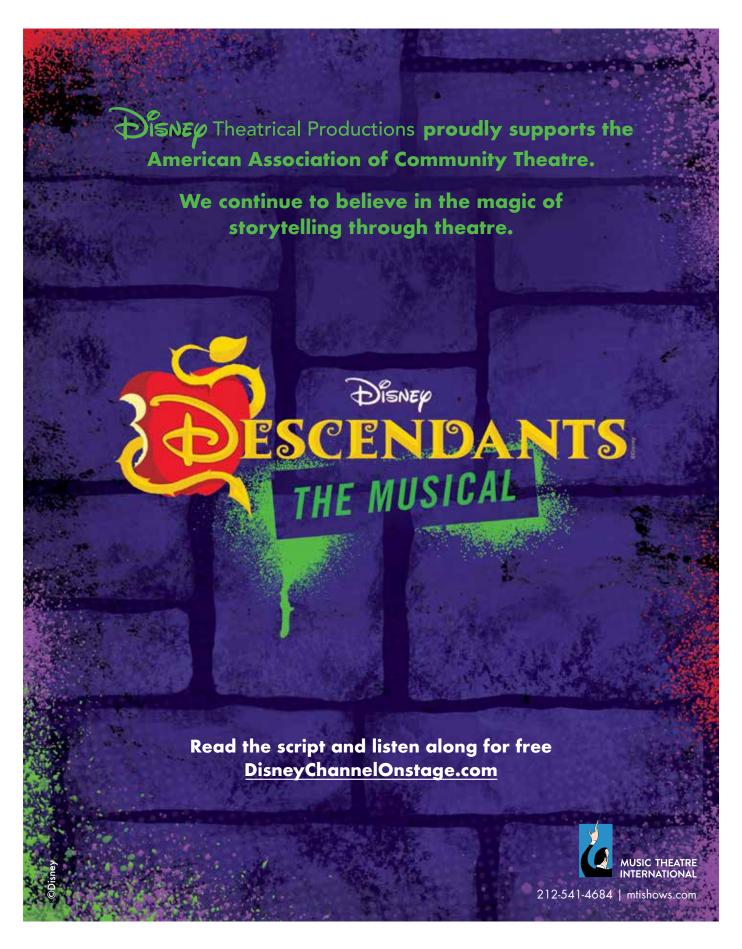


While the ghost lights were burning, we built technology to help everyone feel safe.

Automated social distancing for reserved seating helps patrons feel confident to return.



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X Dane Winters Germany (US Army) (2021)

A Messsage From AACT:

AACT strives to create positive public awareness through the performing arts. The theatre should always be a safe place in our communities. Our stories, our experiences, and our lives are what connects us, unites us, inspires us, teaches us, and puts a mirror up to the face of humanity. AACT is committed to those fundamental principles. To our black colleagues, artists, members, and partners, AACT stands with you in the movement towards greater equality, equity, inclusion, and justice. Your voice matters. Black Lives Matter. Your story matters.

To learn more or find out how you can help, explore these resources:

- Black Theatre Network: blacktheatrenetwork.org/
- National Bail Fund Network via the Community Justice Exchange: communityjusticeexchange.org/nbfn-directory
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund: naacpldf.org/
- Communities United Against Police Brutality: cuapb.org/what_we_do
- Black Lives Matter: blacklivesmatter.com/
- · Movement for Black Lives: m4bl.org
- Black Visions Collective: blackvisionsmn.org/
- Dear White American Theatre: weseeyouwat.com/

#blacklivesmatter

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Spotlight

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AACTFest 2021 Transformed



Theatre everywhere is facing—and meeting—the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. And AACTFest is no exception.

At its heart is the festival system itself—the state-to-regional process that for decades has selected the 12 productions to perform at nationals. By this spring, however, it was clear that the process needed to be rethought, if next year's national festival were to continue showcasing the best of community theatre in America.

"Many states had already made the difficult decision to cancel or delay their own festivals indefinitely," explains Jim Walker, AACT Vice President for Festivals. "It also was clear that many theatres would struggle to meet the financial commitment to present festival shows."

It was a quandary whose solution came after much thought and discussion by AACT leadership at all levels: AACTFest 2021 will go forward with a one-time-only invitational system, culminating in the national festival, June 14-19, 2021 in Louisville, Kentucky.

"It will be different," Walker says, "but not unfamiliar to AACT, who used the invitational model for the first AACTFest, years ago. In essence, we're going back to our roots, this time as a way to reduce barriers to participation, while supporting the festival's essential mission."

Thanks to these changes for 2021, people will once again gather to attend workshops, network, see compelling theatre from across the nation, and enjoy the biggest theatre family reunion in the United States.

The Invitational Process

Here is how the 2021 National AACTFest invitational system will work:

- AACT will accept applications from member theatres that
 want to be considered for the national festival, and are
 willing to put forth a production to be judged by traveling
 adjudicators within a set timeline. The online application
 deadline is October 31, 2020. Although it is strongly
 encouraged to have a show selected inorder to expedite the
 application process, Theatres are not required to have a show
 in mind before applying. A deadline will be established upon
 follow-up as to when show selection must be submitted.
- Applications will be reviewed with follow-up interviews, and 25 theatres will be selected from the pool of applicants. These 25 theatres will have a production adjudicated for possible National Festival participation. Again, those theatres may choose to perform whichever play they wish.
- Theatres may present a full-length production within their season, or present a cutting specifically mounted for the festival to be reviewed by traveling adjudicators. If a full-length production is presented, the theatre company must also have a 60-minute cut version of the script available for

the adjudicators, along with the rights-holder's written permission to cut. At AACTFest 2021, all festival rules will apply (See the revised 2021 *AACTFest Handbook* online at aact.org/handbook).

- For a production to be considered, it must be performed for adjudicators between November 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.
- Five sets of two adjudicators each, hired by AACT, will attend productions. Each set will see a roster of five productions, and from that field will nominate two to advance. Through this cycle, 10 productions will be selected to be presented in Louisville. One production will represent Region X at the national festival, selected separate from the application process. The full panel of adjudicators may decide on a twelfth show from all 25 that they have reviewed.
- A full set of criteria used by adjudicators will be made available to the producing theatres.
- When a set of adjudicators attends, there will be time, either directly following the performance or early the next day, for them to offer feedback to the director and/or company.
- Productions will be selected from the 25 adjudicated shows to perform at AACTFest 2021 in Louisville. Each theatre will receive \$3,100 to aid with travel expenses.
- There will be an effort to find performances from each region, but the inclusion of fully-realized productions will take priority.
- Because of its unique situation, Region X's existing adjudication will select their contribution to the festival.
- Given the uncertainty of these times, there may be few applications, in which case AACT reserves the right to search out theatres to provide a full roster of productions.
- If a state or regional festival does go forward, winners will be announced and celebrated at AACTFest 2021. Participation in a regional festival does not prohibit a theatre from applying to the invitational.
- No festival commissioners will be used in this process; however, once a play is selected for performance at AACTFest 2021, a mentor will be assigned to assist the theatre company with meeting national festival standards and rules.

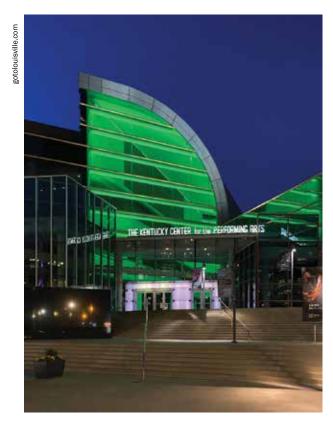
"This will not be an easy process," Walker said, "but we will work toward a fair and open method, with a level playing field."

The theatres at AACTFest 2021 will go through a rigorous application, interview, and adjudication process in order to represent the nation. In the summer of 2021, we will gather to entertain, educate, and celebrate our victory by keeping the doors open. ◆

AACTFest 2021 – A Celebration of Theatre

AACTFest 2021 is scheduled for June 14-19, 2021 in Louisville, Kentucky. *And Louisville is ready for us!*

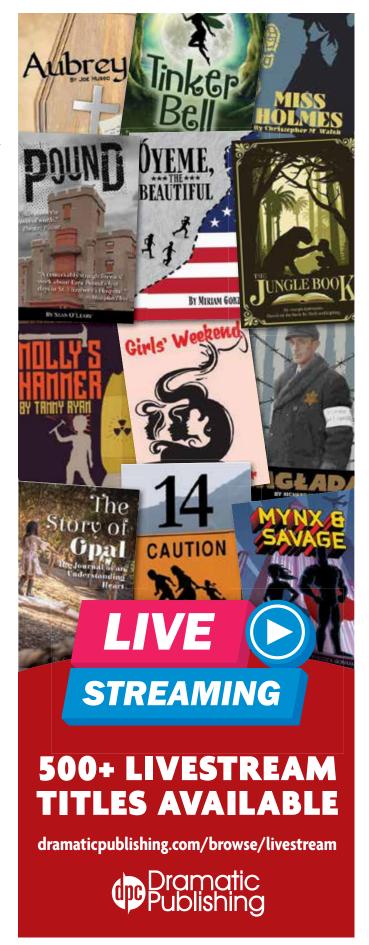
The national festival is not only a celebration of theatre, but of life, and the connections and friendships we make along the way—something we need now, more than ever. So, put AACTFest 2021 on your calendar, and come celebrate with us.

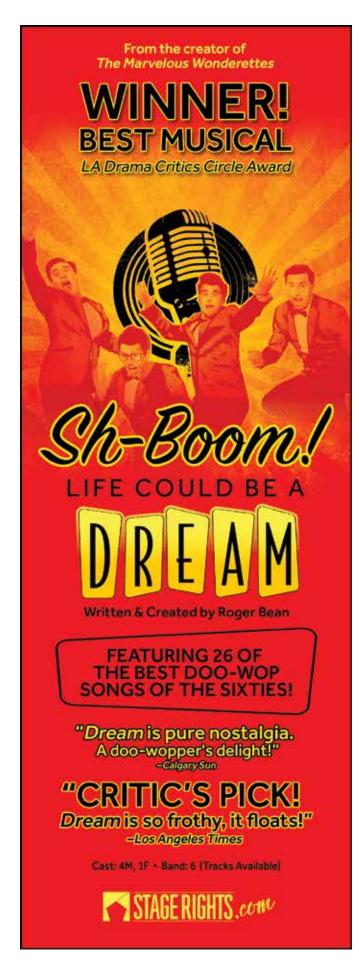


Louisville's state-of-the-art Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts will be home to AACTFest 2021, AACT's national theatre festival, June 14–19, 2021. The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts and the majority of the city of Louisville are currently lit up green, the color of compassion, empathy, and renewal.

AACT is working diligently to make the festival process accessible and affordable for all theatres across the nation. It's also working with its Corporate Partners to ensure the festival will again be a memorable experience. Final planning is well underway for a host of festival events, including the Monologue Competition, sponsored by Dramatists Play Service, and the National Design Competition, sponsored by USITT, that celebrates community theatre designers from across the country. Plus, as always, exhibitors will also be on hand with information and advice on products and services to help your theatre be the best it can be.

continued on next page 🕨







Registration

Early registration opens July 1, 2020 (aact.org/21), and AACT members will receive a 15% discount on registration fees. Should your plans change, refunds will be available until May 1, 2021.

AACT YouthFest 2021

Applications are now available for youth groups to perform and be adjudicated in an open forum that fosters a true learning experience. In addition, Travel and Lodging Grants will be available to the groups selected, and festival week is filled with workshops, activities, and social events just for them. For information on applying, directors may visit aact.org/youthfest.

Call for AACTFest 2021 Workshops

The AACT Workshop Committee is looking for workshop presenters to share their expertise at AACTFest 2021. See the story on page 11 for full details. Proposals must be received by November 15, 2020, via the online RFP (Request for Proposals) at aact.org/workshoprfp.

Volunteer Opportunities

In Louisville, AACT will continue working hard to ensure a rewarding festival experience for all who attend. However, we also rely heavily on the expertise, time, and commitment of volunteers to make that happen. Whether for a few hours or a full-week commitment, greeters, booth sitters, stuffers, and smiling faces are needed to help create the festival magic. If you are interested and can dedicate a few hours to volunteer, please email quiana@aact.org.

Host Hotel

The Hyatt Regency Downtown is our host hotel, offering discounted rates for festival attendees. It's also the location for AACTFest special events, workshops, exhibits, and conferences. The four-star hotel is within walking distance of the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, and Actors Theatre of Louisville. (A trolley will be available to transport those staying at the hotel to the festival theatre.) The Hyatt is also just steps from the Fourth Street Live District, Louisville's premier dining and entertainment destination. Watch the AACTFest 2021 page [aact.org/21] for more information on hotel accommodations and travel options. •

Call for AACTFest 2021 Workshops

The AACT Workshop Committee is offering you the opportunity to share your expertise with others at the national festival of AACTFest 2021. Submit your proposal for a workshop via the online form at aact.org/workshopRFP – and don't be afraid to think outside the box. Proposals need to be received by November 15, 2020.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- COVID-19 recovery, outreach, reinventing productions, audience safety, and communications
- Licensing
- Acting (various styles and techniques)
- · Fight Choreography
- Musical Theatre
- Directing
- Starting a Special Needs Theatre Program
- Theatre for Youth
- Administration
- Technology (IT)

We would also love to see more proposals for workshops on:

- · Technical theatre
- Improvisation
- Board Development
- Organizational Transitions (hiring your first staff)
- Anything else you can think of!

Workshops are well received when those in attendance have a chance to learn by doing, so please keep that in mind as you put together your proposal. Most workshops will be in the traditional 75-minute format, but we're open to ideas for longer and shorter presentations.



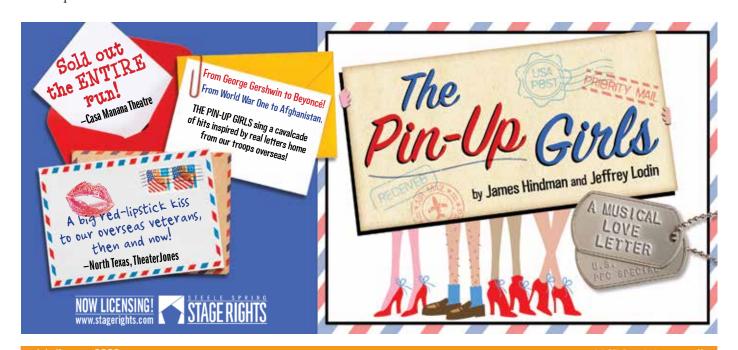
AACTFest workshops cover a wide range of topics to enhance participants knowledge in many areas of theatre. Here James Sherman leads a "hands-on" workshop in improvisation at AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

The RFP (Request for Proposals) form is available to complete and submit online at aact.org/workshopRFP.

The Workshop Committee is also interested in suggestions for new and exciting workshop topics that could be presented by persons other than yourself. Email your workshop ideas to Nancy Eppert at workshops@aact.org.

AACT does not provide honorariums for general session workshop presenters.

Help us enrich the creative experience in Louisville at AACTFest 2021. ♦



Florida State Festival Reimagined

Florida will have a state festival this year on August 15, 2020 at Theatre Winter Haven. A single traditional component will be missing—the theatre competition. Dan Chesnicka, Producing Director of Theatre Winter Haven observed, "This is an anomalous year, but if we move away from competition, it leaves us with more time to provide crucial resources to member theatres."

"We know people are craving content, but they're hesitant to participate. It's up to us to set their minds at ease."

The festival will be a one-day event with workshops for actors and technicians, along with panels and presentations for administrators. As is true throughout AACT, Florida theatres are struggling with reopening and finding new income sources. So, this festival will have panel discussions by grant writers and reviewers, and a presentation from state health department

officials. Since performers and technicians will still want to build their resumes, there will also be sessions with industry leaders on finessing audition skills, as well as potential workshops in stage combat, puppetry, and costuming. The "reimagineers" will also expand their offerings to include a talk on stage management.

The Florida State Festival will conclude with a one-man show, to be performed in an outdoor space adjacent to the Theatre Winter Haven, to ensure social distancing. Steven Butler, Executive Director of the Florida Theatre Conference said, "We know people are craving content, but they're hesitant to participate. It's up to us to set their minds at ease."

Since the cost of bringing a show to a festival can be a problem for some companies, Kristofer Geddie, Florida Community Theatre Division Chair of the Florida Theatre Conference, is hopeful the emphasis on workshops and presentations will draw theatres that were reluctant to take part in previous years. Festival planners acknowledge they will need to be flexible with whatever new challenge may arrive in the coming weeks, but as Producing Director Dan Chesnicka observed, "We're going to do what's best for our theatre community." •



Now, More Than Ever, AACT is Here to Help

In early March, when the Center for Disease Control (CDC) first advised against public gatherings, AACT sprang into action, developing resources to help theatres amid the growing COVID-19 health crisis.

AACT's first move was to create a COVID-19 Response page on its website. Within a few weeks, the page had racked up over a thousand views. By May 1, the total had climbed to over 3,000 views, and by June, it was well over 7,000, and still climbing.

The COVID-19 Response page's chief strength is that it collects, in one place, links to the most important information your theatre needs. This includes production-related resources, like working with play publishers on issues such as cancellations/postponements, and rights for the streaming of productions. A section on management and finances includes links to state and federal resources, as well as fundraising guidance, and remote working. You'll also find links for communications management, nonprofit resources and tools, and respected health sources.

But this was just the beginning, as AACT developed and announced resources of its own, each of them linked from the COVID-19 Response page.

Online Discussion Groups

Networking has always been one of AACT's great strengths. Its most recent additions are the COVID-19 Community Theatre Resource Group and the COVID-19 Community Theatre Educators Group on Facebook. They are both open to all members, to encourage the sharing of ideas and information—and a strong sense of community.

In addition, organizational members have access to the email-based AACTList, which provides a private forum for problem solving and information sharing on *any* theatre-related issue. All discussions are archived for future reference.

Resource Roster

AACT's Resource Roster has been a member-only service for many years, but during the current health crisis, it's being made available to the entire theatre community. When you contact the Resource Roster, AACT will work to connect you with a professional or expert in community theatre to help you navigate these difficult times. Expertise ranges from finance and budgeting to educational programming, from fundraising to marketing and communication, and more.

Webinars

Perhaps the most popular and far-reaching service introduced by AACT is its continuing series of webinars and roundtables. These online presentations feature knowledgeable experts in such areas as fundraising, licensing issues, and technology (including streaming). In many cases, participants may submit questions to the presenters in advance of the webinar itself.

AACT webinars are presented live, then recorded for those who could not attend, or who would like to review the content presented. A complete list of both upcoming and previously recorded sessions can be found via the COVID-19 response page, or directly at aact.org/webinars. A listing of upcoming AACT member roundtables can be found at aact.org/roundtables (member log-in required).

Looking to the Future

It's still unclear just how long the pandemic will be with us—or what the long-term effects will be. What *is* clear is that AACT will continue doing everything it can to strengthen your resources and provide you with the tools to weather this storm. The resources provided on AACT's COVID-19 Response page are just the beginning. ◆

All resources mentioned in this article can be found at aact.org/covid.



AACT Webinar Series 2020: When the Going Gets Tough

When the world began to shut down, AACT responded by staying open and expanding its outreach services. Prior to February 2020, AACT educational opportunities included festival workshops, town halls, the TEAMS Conference, the National Directors Conference, the Resource Roster, and Community Theatre Managers Conference. Plus, we were about ready to launch pop-up workshops in Idaho and Washington.

When wisdom dictated that we drastically pare back face-to-face gatherings, AACT moved quickly to provide important, new services to theatres across the nation. As we go to press, more than a dozen webinars, reaching over 2,000 participants, have brought us together to learn more about the challenges facing us. Webinars have shown how to deal with safety issues, market effectively, identify fundraising opportunities, and create online courses for youth. Other sessions have helped us reconnect to our craft, including applying age make-up and sharing our inventory of sets, props, and costumes. Webinars have also connected us to publishing houses and licensing agencies. And AACT even hosted an online performance, with a cast drawn from seven different member theatres.

It's all about connecting people with resources—and other theatre people.

"We are located in rural central Wisconsin, which is enough of a challenge in the best of times," says Sandra Pheiffer, Board President of the Adams Community Theatre. "Thanks for throwing us some excellent lifelines, so that we can be well-informed, and work toward not only surviving, but thriving."



Courtney Casteel, of the Kankakee Valley Theatre Association in Illinois, was particularly impressed by "The Publisher Response to COVID-19: What Comes Next?" Calling it "Very informative" she says she "would love to see [AACT webinars] continue beyond the pandemic!" (And they will.)

Winston Daniels, AACT Operations and Events Assistant (and Zoom guru), sees the webinars as a way for theatre people to socialize and problem-solve, rather than becoming mired in the problems. "It's a beautiful way to connect and support one another while learning," he explains.

Ideas for the webinars have been generated by AACT members at large, as well as by the board and the staff. In community theatre, we all know the value of reaching out, because it is the right thing to do. ◆

We have been inspired by the increased engagement, dialogue, and positive feedback on the webinars. The AACT office seeks to find relevant and informative content that serves the needs of community theatres. Please feel free to send any ideas you might have to Quiana Clark-Roland, AACT Executive Director at quiana@aact.org.





#WeAreTheatre In the Midst of COVID-19

Ashley N. Parks

The novel coronavirus, a.k.a COVID-19, has caused unprecedented hardships for people all over the world. Those involved in the work of community theatres across the country are not immune to these struggles. That's why AACT has created an online WeAreTheatre Challenge to combat some of the financial losses community theatres are experiencing as a result of this global pandemic. This fun, creative, and inspiring new challenge also serves to remind everyone that no matter what happens, theatre will continue to thrive.



The idea is simple, calling on participants to use social media to raise awareness (and money) by calling attention to the quality, power, and importance of community theatre.

Looking to get involved? All you have to do is post a 30-second to 60-second video, or a picture of a performance, design project, costume and/or makeup transformation (or any kind of performing arts-related content) and upload it to social media! Facebook seems to be getting the most traction, but don't be afraid to explore using Instagram, Twitter, or Tik Tok.

Of course, work in the theatre is a collaborative effort, so the main objective is to challenge your friends to make content too. Just tag them in your post to get their attention. Most importantly, the videos and pictures for the WeAre Theatre Challenge can serve as a creative fundraising tool to benefit your home community theatre. So, don't forget to give your theatre a shout-out! The more people you mobilize to create, the more you and your friends' home theatres can reap the rewards of your artistry. Also consider fundraising on behalf of AACT, so it can continue to provide resources for community theatres across the country.

Though we can't get together physically, we can make a difference during this tumultuous time. So, let's do what we do best, and get creative.

It's important to remember to mark your posts with #WeAreTheatre or #WeAreTheater, (depending on which version of English spelling you prefer) and #AACT to join the movement. Using these hashtags gets your content seen by more people, which means more help and exposure for your theatre. And who doesn't want to share the joys and rewards of theatre as far and as widely as possible?

So, get up, get your camera, and get creative! We are theatre, and we will get through this—together. ◆

Ashley N. Parks is a rising senior at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas, majoring in theatre and writing. She served as an operations intern for AACTFest 2019, and hopes to pursue a career in performance and/or production in theatres across the country, or as a writer/editor for a major dramatic publishing company. Her ultimate goal is to continue to cultivate the love and power of the performing arts.







Fundraising... now?? Yes!

Brian Bonde, ACFRE

It's the middle of Act I. You are the tech director, and things are going great. Suddenly, all the stage lights go black! What do you do? The audience is waiting and wondering. Do you sit back and wait? No! You come up with a solution. Quick! Then you explain to the crowd what happened, and get things going as soon as possible.

That's what it's like, running a performing arts organization right now. The crisis came on fast. We don't know how long it is going to last. And we don't have time to stall. People are adapting quickly to this temporary new world, and the worst thing we can do is to do nothing. But what do we do—especially, to generate the financial resources needed to keep our organization alive?

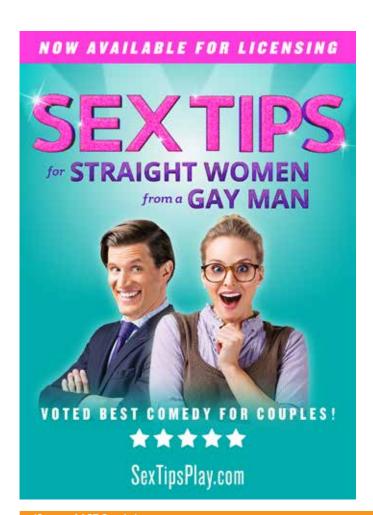
Same storm, different boats

We are not all in the same boat. The storm is all around us, but there are lots of boats. Set aside your fears because your boat is filling with water. Those are *your* fears, not your donor's. That is why, these

days, a big part of your job is to reach out to your donors and find out what boat *they* are in. That means communicating more, not less. The worst thing we as fundraisers can do is to assume that our donors won't or can't give. In fact, the nonprofit organizations that have remained relevant and actively fundraising have seen great success lately. Many donors are giving even more right now because they know there is a crisis, and they care.

Your donor manages their pocketbook

It is presumptuous to think that we control the wallets and purses of our donors. They do that just fine. Despite the impact of the crisis, most people still have their jobs, their money, and their investments. Your task is just to tell your story. Donors are wondering how their favorite community theatre is doing, and what they can do. But they can't help if you don't ask. And asking those who can give at this time is engaging them in the "community" part of "Community Theatre."





Make an assessment and a plan

Before you talk to donors, take stock of your immediate financial situation. What are your real cash needs for the next year? Do you have capital needs? What can be deferred or cut? Work with your board to come up with your "continuity plan," which includes solid numbers. (A continuity plan outlines your procedures to maintain your operations and programs while you work toward recovery.) Then set a fundraising goal and design your 90-day plan to raise the money. Be ready for questions. Why do you need money? How are you going to use it? People are passionate about your mission, so be prepared to explain what it will take to ensure that your theatre will continue once the crisis ends.

Talk to your donors, board, and volunteers, now!

Our donors are our organizational family, and we need to support one another as a family right now. Many of your best supporters may be feeling socially isolated, and are picking up their phones. Call them! They will answer, and they want to talk. But who do we contact first? Just like a capital campaign, go top-down and inside-out:

- Go to your data and identify your best friends
- Start at the top with your best donors
- Go inside to your board and other volunteers
- Ask all of these supporters to help and strategize with you
- Work your way through your other donors

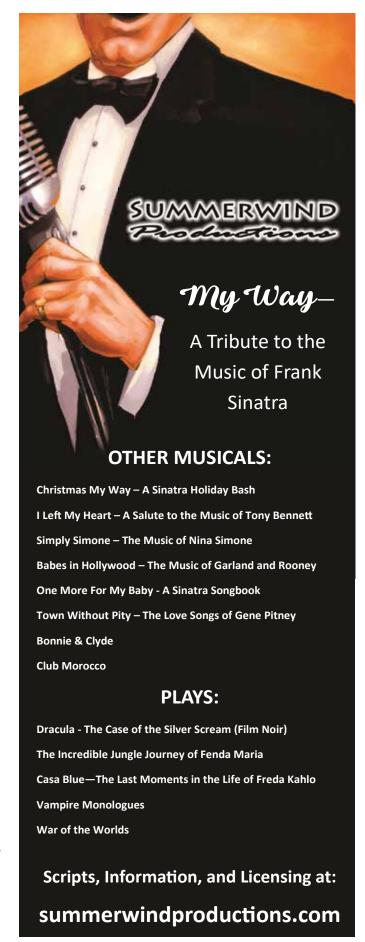
Be authentic, sincere, and transparent

There is no unique language for talking to donors, just *your* language. Find your voice and remember that fundraising is not about money—it's about mission. Donors have a lot on their troubled minds, just like you do. But they still care about your work. Celebrate their past support. Ask, "How are you doing?" and then truly listen. When they ask how *you* are doing, use the assessment (described above) to tell them. If they want to help, don't be afraid to ask. They still believe in you and what you do. That's why they have given in the past. They don't need, and probably don't want, anything in return, other than to know they are helping you survive this. Remind them of the beautiful experiences, performances, and satisfaction you have shared—and how much more is ahead. We all want to feel better right now. Allow your supporters to feel the joy of giving.

Remember the Golden Rule

More than anything, treat your donors as you would like to be treated. We all want to feel like we are a part of the organization we love. Our national philanthropic culture grew out of a sense of "civil society." If we needed a barn, a hospital, or a theatre, we got together and built it. That spirit still lives, and will get us through this crisis. If our mission matters, we're being negligent if we don't ask for help from those who care the most about the work we do. ◆

Brian Bonde is a consultant to nonprofit organizations through his firm, Advanced Certified Fundraising, LLC, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He provides services in fundraising, capital campaigns, staff and board development, marketing communications, planning, and holds the highest professional certification in his field, the Advanced Certified Fundraising Executive (ACFRE).





4 Tips Before You Stream

Streaming video is a *big* topic, but here are four things you definitely need to think about before streaming a performance. You'll also find a number of online resources for creating streaming video on the AACT website's COVID-19 page (aact.org/covid).

1. Check your Internet bandwidth

Most people don't even think about how fast or slow their internet connection is, until there's a problem. (Heck, most people don't even know what speeds they're paying for from their provider.) So, step one, do a test using a free online service like speedtest.net. This will give you an idea of how fast or slow your connection is. This test is going to give you a result in something called *megabits*, often abbreviated as "mbps". You're going to need consistent upload speeds of at least around 9 mbps to get a reasonable stream (more is always better). When streaming, your upload speeds are more important than your download speeds. If you are lucky enough to have a fiber internet connection, your upload speeds might be far greater than 9 mbps, which is great, but many folks are still stuck with traditional copper broadband, which is fairly limited on the upload side of the internet highway. If you don't have at least 9 mbps, I wouldn't bother streaming—it's just going to be too risky.

2. Ask the video guy

Every theatre company has someone with video skills they call on for help. Trust me, they're going to be necessary, since they're likely to have both the gear and expertise to make the stream a success. I would also enlist the services of an IT (Information Technology) person, if possible, because they're going to understand the transmission side of things better than anyone. Together, those two folks are going to be able to spot potential problems and suggest



ways to improve your stream. You'll also need to incorporate some extra time in your rehearsal schedule to accommodate this technical aspect of your production. Essentially, you'll have added two more members to your production team. Collaborating with them on how to make the stream work best will be essential.

3. Test, and test some more

Set up a private Facebook page that you test-stream to during the rehearsal process. Streaming live to social media not only involves lots of technical challenges, but also permissions—the authorization given to users that enables you to access specific resources on the network. I would advise streaming the entire show to this test page. Stream it every night of rehearsal. Then—and this is very important—review the stream afterwards to look for things that can be improved upon. Was the camera in focus? Is the sound good? Did the stream stop suddenly in Act II? There's no such thing as too much testing—especially when you're dealing with something new to the performance process.

4. Should you stream?

As you've read, streaming a performance adds a lot of complexity to doing a show. So, the question must be asked: *is it worth it?* If your group is looking for donations, or simply wants to keep your theatre visible in your community, then perhaps so. But, if you're hoping that selling online tickets will solely replace inperson revenue, then my feeling is no, it's probably not worth it. One factor in this is expense: large-scale multi camera productions are too costly for even the largest of community theatres. And while the streaming product for most groups is likely going to be fairly simple and cheaper, it will also lack the production values found in higherend video. In any case, the amount of work and time involved must be taken into account, since it will definitely impact your production resources—both human and financial.

Is streaming theatre's next big revolution? Only time will tell. ◆

Philip Powell has worked as a director in commercial and corporate production for over 25 years. He's done work for Amazon, LG Electronics, Walmart, SyFy Channel and HGTV. Philip has also gained national attention for his visual effects supervising, IMAX filmmaking and acting in regional theatres. He is the Executive Director of the Little Theatre of Winston-Salem in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Don't Miss Out on Any of the Exciting Activities and Benefits of AACT Membership for 2020-2021!

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

The American Association of Community Theatre has been committed for more than 30 years to providing you with the best, most timely resources to help you succeed. Due to the recent global COVID-19 crisis, we are working on new ways to help theatres and provide resources. (Visit our website at aact.org/covid.)

In response to the global crisis, and considering the impact it is having on theatres, AACT is making monthly memberships available. AACT is pleased to offer this cost-conscientious option, which allows members of AACT to sign-up for a monthly payment plan.

How do I sign-up for the monthly payment plan?

The monthly payment option may be selected on the online application form when joining AACT, or during the regular renewal period for existing members. Please note that this option is available only for payments with a valid credit card.

Organizations

Organizational Budget	Monthly	Annual
Under \$10 K	\$9	\$85
\$10K - \$24K	\$12	\$120
\$25K - \$99K	\$18	\$185
\$100K - \$249K	\$27	\$300
\$250K - \$499K	\$36	\$400
\$500K - 999K	\$50	\$570
OVER - \$1 Million	\$82	\$955

Individuals

Budget	Monthly	Annual
Individuals	\$9	\$80
Senior	\$6	\$65

Annual AACT memberships are valid September 1 through August 31.

For the full list of membership categories and rates please visit aact.org/membership-fees.

How to Join or Renew

To join or renew your membership, go to aact.org/membership-fees. If you or your theatre are having financial difficulties, reach out to Karen at karen@aact.org to discuss other payment plan options.

Note: If your organization has previously not paid electronically, we ask that you start doing so online at aact.org. This will minimize exposure of our team by avoiding physical presence at the post office box and bank locations. If you require assistance, please let us know. AACT will be moving all membership join/renew processes online by 2021-2022. Paper invoicing will be available by request.

Individual members receive

- Discounted or free professional development programs, events, and conferences
- Access to members-only online library and resources
- A digital and/or printed copy of Spotlight magazine, plus weekly digital communications
- Member-only discounts on scripts, rentals, and theatrerelated services
- Peer-to-peer networking with theatre professionals nationwide
- Online COVID-19 Resources including webinars and member-only roundtables

Organizational members receive

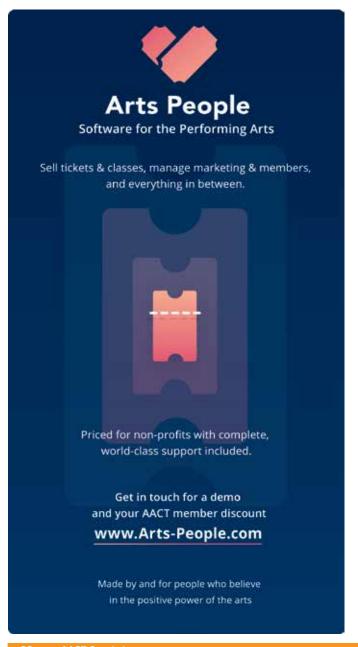
- Discounted or free professional development programs, events, and conferences
- Access to members-only online resources and library. (In cluding the AACTList email discussion group and the AACTivity list of most popular productions, graded for financial success.)
- Member-only discounts on scripts, rentals, and theatrerelated services
- 30% discount on ASCAP's Community Theatre License
- Access to discounted and customized Theatre Insurance Programs
- A digital and/or printed copy of *Spotlight* magazine, plus weekly digital communications
- Peer-to-peer networking with theatre professionals nationwide
- Online COVID-19 Resources including webinars and member-only roundtables
- Ability to use AACT Membership Logo and Decal

Learn more about membership benefits: aact.org/benefits

ASCAP Offers 30% AACT Member Discount

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

ASCAP's Community Theatre License year is September 1 – August 31. Theatres that sign up through the AACT office by September 1 will receive a 30% discount on the ASCAP license fee. An AACT membership is required to receive the discounted rate. Both AACT membership and ASCAP fees must be received in the AACT office by September 10, along with a signed ASCAP license. (If AACT already has an ASCAP license on file for you, there is no need to send a new one.) ASCAP is a membership organization of more than 450,000 songwriters, composers, lyricists, and music publishers. The complete repertoire is available on the ASCAP website, ascap.com.





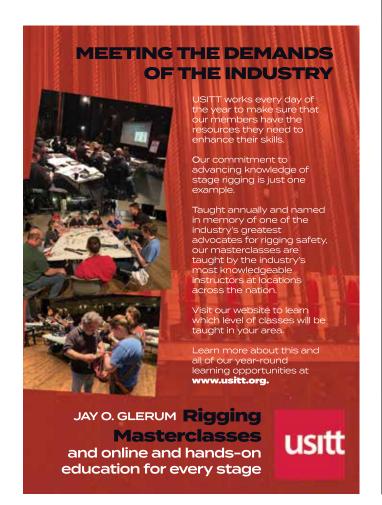
The Community Theatre License covers the theatre for the AACT membership year at all its venues. The license includes copyrighted pre-show, intermission, and post-show music played by means other than live performers. It is important to stress, the Community Theatre License does NOT cover recorded music during a play or music performed live, such as in a musical revue or concert. As artists, or people involved in the arts, we understand and respect the need for artists to be compensated for their craft. It is important to remember the only payment composers receive for a creative work is usually through royalties. The generous discount provided to AACT members by ASCAP is just one of the many benefits of an AACT membership. More information may befound at aact.org/ascap.

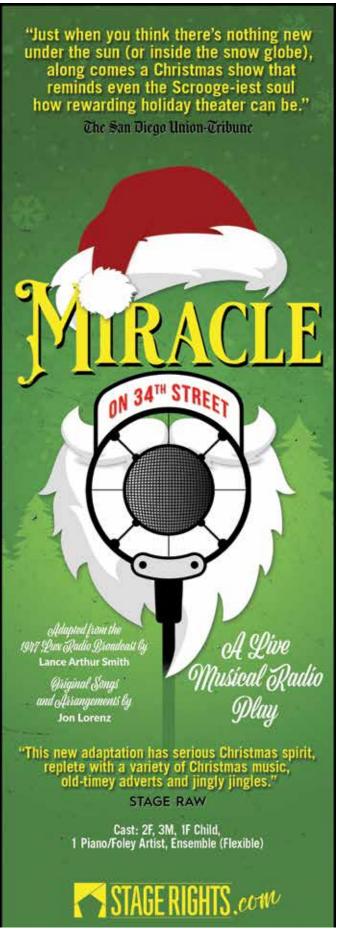


ASCAP 2020 - 2021 RATE SCHEDULE FOR COMMUNITY THEATRES

Operating Budget	ASCAP Fee	With AACT Discount
\$0 - \$24,999	\$189.40	\$132.58
\$25,000 - \$499,999	\$247.50	\$173.25
\$500,000 and over	\$360.30	\$252.21

Discounts will apply to qualified AACT Member Organizations







AACT 2020 Board of Directors Election Results

Welcome to those elected to AACT leadership positions. Congratulations!

Officers on the AACT Board of Directors:



President

Chris Serface
Tacoma, Washington, Region IX

Managing Artistic Director
Tacoma Little Theatre



Executive Vice President

Sara Phoenix
Tulsa, Oklahoma, Region VI
Artistic Director
Theatre Tulsa



Vice President – Festivals

Jim Walker
Aberdeen, South Dakota, Region V

Artistic/Managing Director
Aberdeen Community Theatre



Treasurer

Michael D. Fox
Salt Lake City, Utah, Region VII
Chief Operations Officer
Hale Centre Theatre



Secretary

Frank Peot
Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, Region III
Secretary
AACT Endowment Trustees
Sun Prairie Civic Theatre Board of Directors

Member-at-Large on the AACT Board of Directors:



Emily Anderson Midland, Michigan, Region III Volunteer Center Stage Theatre at Midland Center for the Arts



Chad-Alan Carr Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Region II Founding Executive/Artistic Director Gettysburg Community Theatre



Allen Ebert Madison, Wisconsin, Region III Executive Director Children's Theater of Madison



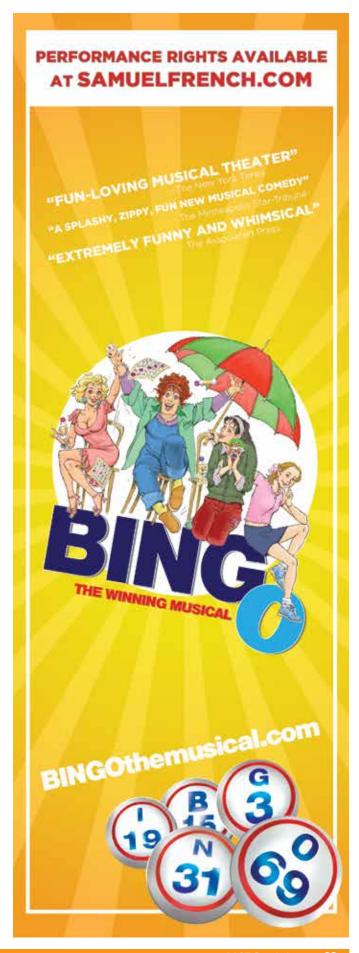
Kristi Quinn
Dakota City, Nebraska, Region V
Artistic Director
Warrior Theatre (Sergeant Bluff, Iowa)
Leader of Theatre and Speech
Sergeant Bluff-Luton Community Schools



Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton Toledo, Oregon, Region IX Education Director Topeka Civic Theatre & Academy (2002 – 2014) The Porthole Players Board of Directors



Jim Walker Aberdeen, South Dakota, Region V Artistic/Managing Director Aberdeen Community Theatre



Listings do not imply AACT endorsement



Americans for the Arts National Arts Marketing Project Annual Conference

Preconference: November 13, 2020 Main Conference: November 14–16, 2020

Chicago, Illinois

Arts marketers work to create a future that reflects organizational visions to better serve audiences and more deeply and equitably engage the community. However, an increasing challenge is competing for the attention of audiences who are overwhelmed by technology

Contact: www.miracleor2.com

and content in the media on a daily basis. Yet, even as resources and attention spans are limited, marketers must be prepared to not only confront these challenges —but also anticipate and prepare for them.

Join NAMP in Chicago to explore three core themes:

You: What new skill(s) do I need to learn to be effective in my individual career?

Your World: What information does the field need to navigate the current environment?

Your Future: What is our collective vision for the future, and how do we reach it?

EDUCATION-ORIENTED

With panel talks and hands-on workshops, learn the skills you need to be a better marketer. From the latest strategies to new technologies and innovations, this is the one-of-a-kind educational experience you've been looking for.

COMMUNITY CULTURE

NAMP values community, and you'll experience unique ways to connect with members of the national arts marketing community. Make long-lasting connections with some of the savviest marketers as you network, learn, and have some fun.

DESIGNED TO INSPIRE

Be inspired by an unrivaled roster of expert speakers, relevant content, and a variety of learning formats to imagine a brighter future. You'll leave reinvigorated by the new connections you'll make and inspired to utilize the latest marketing tools in your own arts marketing endeavors.

Opening Keynote: Carlos Gil
The End Of Marketing: Humanizing Your Brand In The Age Of Social
Media And AI

Social networks are the new norm, and traditional marketing is failing in today's digital, always-on culture where businesses across the world have to face up to how they remain relevant in the choppy waters of the digital ocean. In an era where a YouTube star gets more daily impressions than Nike, Coca-Cola, and Walmart combined, traditional marketing as we know it is dead. This presentation will reinforce that no matter how easy it is to reach potential customers, the critical relationship between brand and consumer still needs the human touch. Learn how to put 'social' back into social media and claim brand relevancy in a world where algorithms dominate, organic reach is dwindling, and consumers don't want to be sold to, they want to be engaged.

Sunday Keynote: Jeffrey L. Bowman Is Your Organization New Majority Ready?

For the first time in human history, what was once the 'minority' will become the majority. What does this mean to your organization and marketplace in this "Age of Acceleration"? Jeffrey L. Bowman, Co-founder and CEO of Reframe - an early stage software and services company that helps teams and businesses accelerate change and growth for the new workplace and marketplace, will share his award-winning insights, best practices, and blue print for how to accelerate growth with the New Majority marketplace while increasing employee retention, productivity, and engagement.

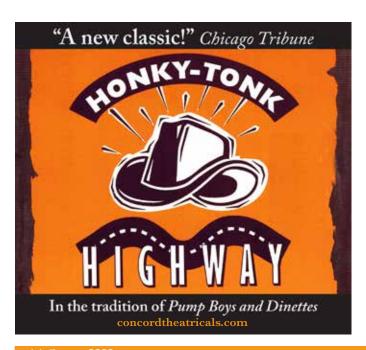
More information: namp.americansforthearts.org/

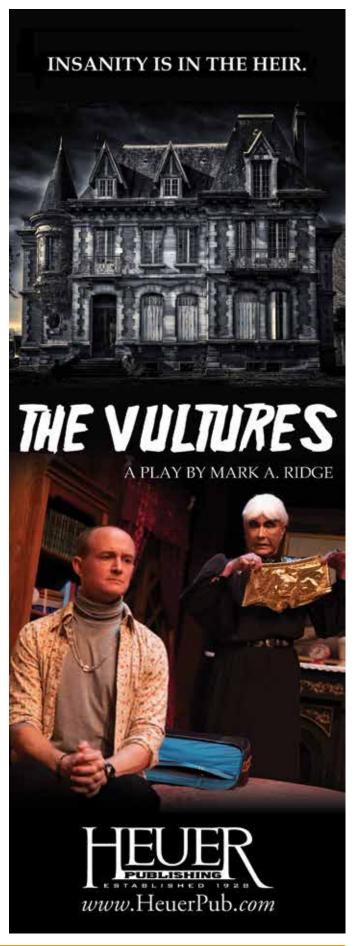
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Please consider including the
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sustain AACT's mission and provide
learning experiences for AACT member
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To learn more about AACT's Legacy Society, visit aact.org/legacy

or contact the AACT office at info@aact.org



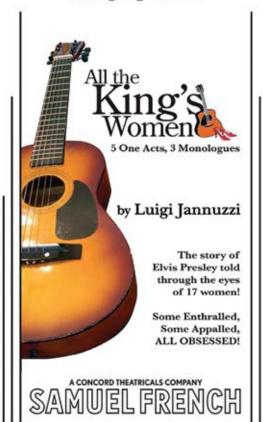


Spotlight on Discounter BroadwayHD



Broadway stages will remain dark at least through Labor Day, September 7. The additional three-month closure, announced by the Broadway League, is the longest extension yet for Broadway's 41 theatres, in response to COVID-19.

"FROM CALIFORNIA TO AUSTRALIA, this play rocks!"



Publisher: ConcordTheatricals.com

Playwright: LuigiJannuzzi.com

The good news is that you can stream your favorite Broadway hits, and watch from the comfort of your home. BroadwayHD is a premiere streaming service for award-winning theatrical productions from New York and beyond. Stream from any device, and watch anytime, anywhere. Check out BroadwayHD's library of hundreds of productions.

AACT members receive a 25% discount on an annual streaming service from BroadwayHD! aact.org/member-discounts

Subscribe now at broadwayhd.com

Artie's Advocacy Tip

Call on Congress to designate funds to be distributed through the National Endowment for the Arts—to

help offset losses in the nonprofit arts industry and expand eligibility through additional federal programs to ensure artists, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in the creative economy can utilize business interruption relief.

Americans for the Arts and the Arts Action Fund are standing up for the arts in America during COVID-19. Keep up with their progress and learn how you can participate at artsactionfund.org/ActionCenter?vvsrc=/Campaigns/72638/Respond

YOU can make a difference!

US HR7011 - Pandemic Risk Reinsurance Program

Another cause to consider is supporting the Pandemic Risk Reinsurance Program. The bill directly addresses future Covid-19 losses and risks. It is estimated that business income losses in the first three months of the pandemic is \$730 billion and will likely be double that by year's end. The insurance industry reserves for all losses is just over \$850 billion. Introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) in mid-May the bill would create the Pandemic Risk Reinsurance Program (PRRP) within the U.S. Treasury Department. The bill would provide coverage up to \$250 million in losses due to any future public health emergency, along with other major benefits and stipulations on use. The US HR7011 bill will be proposed this summer. Please contact the bill sponsor or your local congressman or woman to learn more.

Official Document:

congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/7011/all-info

AACT Web Power

ou'll find listings of upcoming AACT-sponsored events here in Spotlight, but we're always adding new events--and enhancing existing ones. So, for the latest on AACT NewPlayFest and AACTFest 2021, plus conferences, webinars, and online roundtables, go to our website (aact. org). Click on "Events & Education" on the drop-down menu. There you'll find links to all AACT offerings, plus a calendar that lists these and other upcoming events.

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





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by Londos D'Arrigo

writer for JOAN RIVERS, PHYLLIS DILLER and LILY TOMLIN

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For information on becoming an AACT Corporate Partner, visit aact.org/partner

Yale Drama Series 2021 Playwriting Competition David Charles Horn Prize

The Yale Drama Series is seeking submissions for its 2021 playwriting competition. The winning play will be selected by the series' current judge, Paula Vogel. The winner of this annual competition will be awarded the David Charles Horn Prize of \$10,000, publication of their manuscript by Yale University Press, and a staged reading at Lincoln Center's Claire Tow Theater. The prize and publication are contingent on the playwright's agreeing to the terms of the publishing agreement.

Submissions must be original, unpublished full-length plays, with a minimum of 65 pages. Plays with less than 65 pages will not be considered. Translations, musicals, and children's plays are not accepted.

Plays that have been professionally produced or published are not eligible. Plays that have had a workshop, reading, non-professional production, or that have been published as an actor's edition will be considered. Plays may not be under option, commissioned, or scheduled for professional production or publication at the time of submission.

Playwrights may submit only one manuscript per year. Only manuscripts authored by one playwright are eligible.

No entry fee.

Electronic submission strongly urged; hard copy also possible.

Deadline: August 15, 2020

Details: yalebooks.yale.edu/yale-drama-series-submissions

Strange Prescription Your Worst Nightmare Short Play Festival

Strange Prescription is seeking submissions for their first annual Your Worst Nightmare Short Play Festival to be produced at the Shelton Theater in San Francisco November 6-7, 2020.

Plays should be no longer than 10 minutes running time, and center around nightmarish situations. All genres are encouraged including comedies, musicals, and dramas. No children's scripts.

Plays should have a maximum of 5 characters. Minimal props, sets, and lighting - plays will be produced in a 60-seat black box theatre.

Plays should not have had a previous production or have been

published for commercial distribution. Previous staged readings are okay

\$10 entry fee to cover administration costs.

Playwrights may submit up to three (3) entries. Each entry must have a separate entry fee of \$10.

Only .pdf format will be accepted.

6 selected playwrights will receive a \$100 stipend.

Deadline: August 15, 2020

Details: strangerx.com/worstnightmare

New plays written to be performed online!



Eight pets tell their stories of confinement in this ten-minute comedy.



Adapted from Mark Twain's short stories. A humorous first-person account of the first man and wife told in video diaries.



Join this hilarious family as they struggle to endure being stuck at home – together!



Find these shows and more at www.hiStage.com

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AACT Roundtables* aact.org/roundtables winston@aact.org 817-732-3177 x1

*For current AACT members

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

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by Londos D'Arrigo

writer for JOAN RIVERS, PHYLLIS DILLER and LILY TOMLIN

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- ★ Fun, FUN, and more FUN!

June 14 - 19, 2021 Louisville, Kentucky



Louisville's Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts

aact.org/21 Details and Early Bird Registration