

spotlight

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023

IN THIS ISSUE

AACTFest 2023

YouthFest 2023

NewPlayFest 2022

Storytelling Through
Design

RKU



"a brilliant, harrowing interpretation of Remarque's famous novel"

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Elena Victoria Feliz (*Paul*)

Red Tape Theatre (*Chicago, IL*)

Austin D. Oie

CM Dugan



President's Letter

Kristi Quinn
AACT President

I love AACTFest! I love going to theatre festivals and AACTFest is one of the greatest. I cannot urge you enough to join us and experience this wonderful event. You will make friends—some for an entire lifetime—and learn so much, while you meet, mingle, and rub shoulders with community theatre lovers from around the world.

But, best of all, there are the theatre productions. The sheer amount and scope of this national festival is tremendous, and the talent of those in community theatre, from actors to directors to technicians is mind-blowing. Plus, you'll get to meet them, talk to them, and pick their brains while they pick yours. Sounds like heaven? It is.

AACTFest 2023 is in Louisville, Kentucky, June 12 through June 17, 2023—just six months away—at the state-of-the-art Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts. What fun!

Louisville itself is jam-packed with attractions, even for those who do not want to see theatre (who *are* these people?). Bring your family, bring your friends, tell everyone you know who loves theatre. None of them will be disappointed.

With workshops, special events, and exhibits, along with great performances, it shouldn't be missed. Book a room and get registered. Let's do some theatre!

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On the cover: Brylo (Kazarious Brown) and Taz (Mileidy Crespo-Jones) look to a brighter future in the AACT NewPlayFest production of *Launch Day* (Love Stories from the Year 2108) at Theatre Tuscaloosa in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, October 21, 2022. Photo: Porfirio Solórzán

Thank you to Subplot Studio for their sponsorship of the new look and design of *Spotlight* magazine. We look forward to this ongoing and growing partnership in order to bring you the best *Spotlight* quality and content. [Subplotstudio.com](https://subplotstudio.com)

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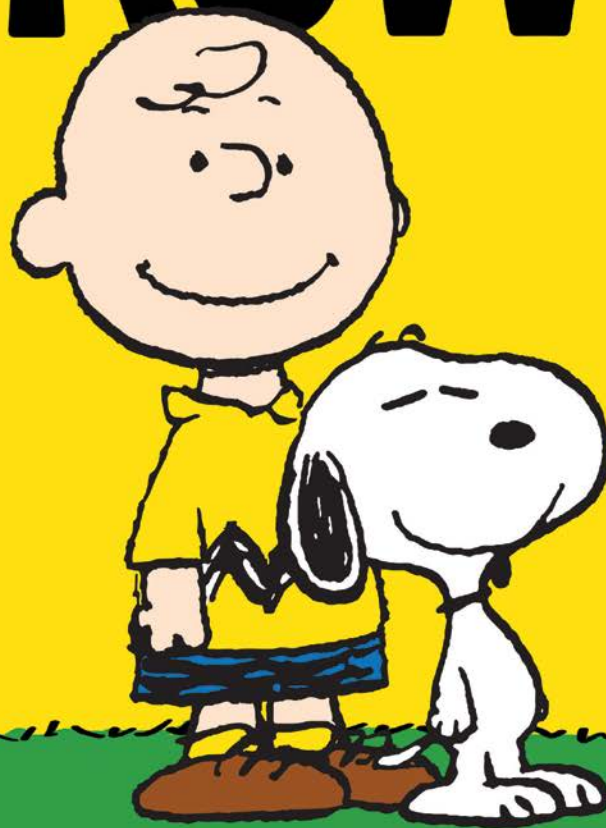
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Contacting AACT

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 Jerri Shafer

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Spotlight

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

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Festivals/Engagements Coordinator

Upcoming Events

AACT Script Club

January 5 – *Clue: On Stage* by Sandy Rustin
adapted from the screenplay by Jonathan Lynn

March 2 – *Kinky Boots*, book by Harvey Fierstein,
music and lyrics by Cyndi Lauper
aact.org/club

AACT Industry Connections

January 11 – Arts People
February 8 – Upstage
aact.org/ic

AACT Online Roundtables

January 17 – New Year's Resolutions (All-Volunteer Theatres)
February 21 – Open Topic (Theatres with paid staff)
aact.org/roundtables

AACT Winter Board Meetings 2023

February 24-25
Courtyard San Diego Old Town
2435 Jefferson Street
San Diego, California
aact.org/winter

Adjudication Training Seminar

Virtual Session Schedule –
March 18, 25, April 1, 15, 29, May 6
Onsite Session Schedule – June 12-17
Hyatt Regency Louisville
aact.org/seminar

National Arts Action Summit (Arts Advocacy Day) and Nancy Hanks Lecture 2023

AACT is a National Partner
March – TBA
Washington, DC
americansforthearts.org

USITT 2023 Conference and Stage Expo

March 14-17
St. Louis, Missouri
usitt.org

World Theatre Day 2023

March 27
aact.org/world-theatre-day

AACT Summer Board Meetings 2023

Held during AACTFest 2023
June 17
Hyatt Regency Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

Design and Layout: Subplot Studio

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Countdown to AACTFest 2023!

Join us as we celebrate the return of community theatre together



We are less than six months away from celebrating the return to theatre with a festival that you will not forget!

Plan now to attend AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky, for amazing theatre productions and a host of workshops, parties, and special events. Register now before the early-bird deadline expires.

Festival registration includes tickets to all 12 AACTFest and YouthFest shows, vetted and sought-after workshops, Broadway Keynote Ben Cameron (see page 13), exhibitor booths and giveaways, access to Design Competition displays, the festival awards show, and social events.

Since some festival offerings have limited capacity, we encourage you to register early so you don't miss any of the fun, excitement, and great theatre that only AACTFest can offer.

The national festival will feature the 12 productions that have received top honors in their respective state and regional festivals. All participating theatre companies adhere to a common set of rules documented in the AACTFest 2023 Handbook aact.org/handbook.

Theatres that have been selected to advance from state to regional festivals are listed on the Moving On section at aact.org/23 and here in *Spotlight* (see page 24). You'll also find information on upcoming state and regional festival on the AACT Calendar (page 46) or aact.org/calendar.

Festival Registration

Dates	AACT Member	Non-member
Early Bird (Sept. 1, 2022-March 1, 2023)	\$315	\$390
Advance (March 2, 2023-June 1, 2023)	\$415	\$490
Onsite (June 2, 2023-June 13, 2023)	\$485	\$560
VIP Festival Package (space limited)	\$550	

AACT Youth Discount

(18 and younger): \$75 off registration

Competing/Advancing Company Member

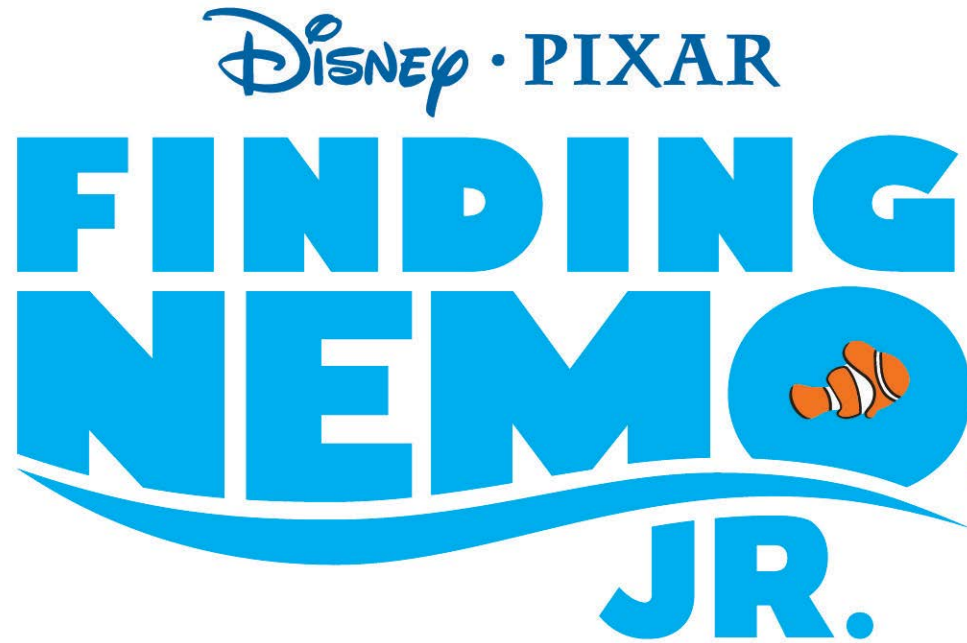
\$10 off registration



Performances for AACTFest 2023 and AACT YouthFest 2023 will be held in the Bombard Theatre at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts



Registration and more information available at aact.org/23



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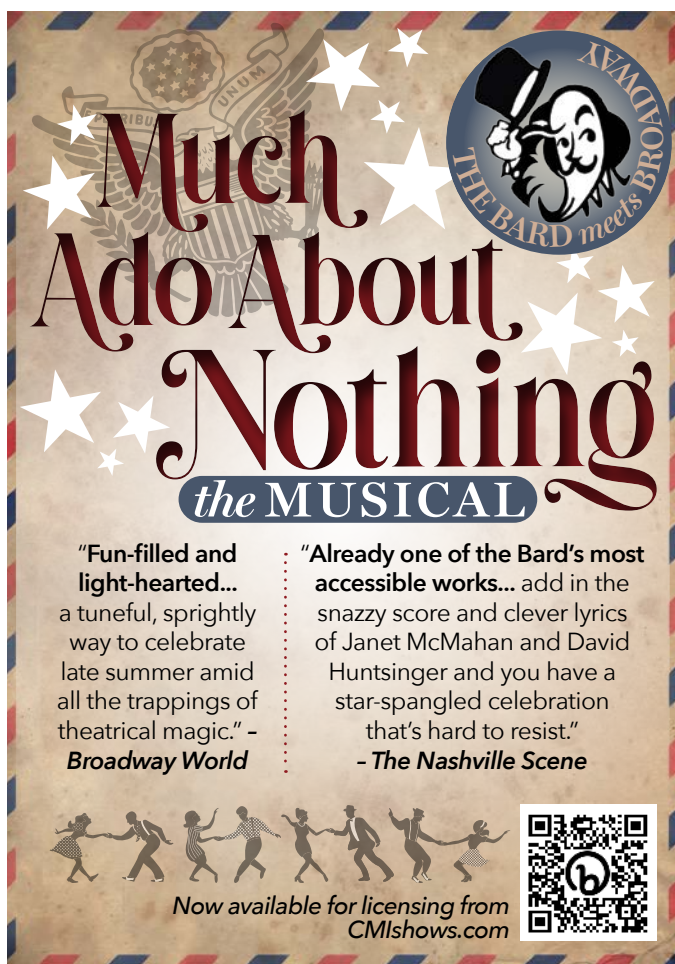
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VIP Festival Package: \$550

Experience AACTFest 2023 at its best by becoming a VIP!
Space is limited to 100 people.

- Access to all festival shows, workshops, and special events
- AACTFest Welcome Gift Package
- Reserved seating – pick and reserve your seat ahead of time for all 12 shows!
- No-hassle festival check-in – Festival registration items will be delivered to your room if you stay at the host hotel, or expedited at the registration desk
- *Belle of Louisville* Steamboat Dinner and Cruise

Contact Conference Coordinator Jill Patchin by email (jill@aact.org) for VIP Package questions and group-seating reservations.



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Special Events, Training, and Competitions

Adjudication Training Workshop (limited to 30 people) - \$50

The success of any AACT Festival is in large part dependent upon the skill of its adjudicators. In this introductory workshop you'll learn what guidance comes from the festival handbook and what kind of autonomy is granted to adjudicators, as well as how to find the best people for the job.

Adjudication Training Seminar (limited to 15 people) - \$150

AACT Adjudication Training is an add-on event that will be held before (virtually) and in Louisville, during the national festival. The \$150 fee helps cover the costs of the five-plus days of intensive instruction. Festival registration is required. As a part of the curriculum, participants will also view AACTFest performances and receive additional training/assignments during festival week. Register for the training when you register for AACTFest.

Note: Adjudication Training 2023 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Scholarships are available. AACT will be providing two scholarships to support and mentor theatre-makers of color.

Youth Conference (limited to 30 people) - \$40 aact.org/youthconf

The AACT Youth Theatre Conference is for youth who aspire to be leaders within the arts and theatre communities. Participants will be exposed to a line-up of powerful theatre performances from around the country, engage in educational workshops, receive mentoring and shadowing from arts professionals and take part in activities that are challenging and fun! The conference is open to ages 12-18.

Belle of Louisville Sunset Steamboat Cruise - \$30

Whether you're admiring the sunset or dancing in the moonlight, enjoy yourself out on the river with a gentle breeze and good company. Concessions and bar will be available. The two-hour excursion on the *Belle of Louisville* will be the evening of June 15, 2023.

Belle of Louisville Sunset
Endowment Dinner and Cruise - \$150

Indulge in a truly special evening aboard the *Belle of Louisville* for AACT's Steamboat Dinner and Cruise. Proceeds go to support the AACT Endowment. This two-hour sunset cruise on the evening of June 15, 2023, will include dinner, two drink tickets, music, and fun for all.

Monologue Competition
(adult and youth) - \$25
aact.org/monologue

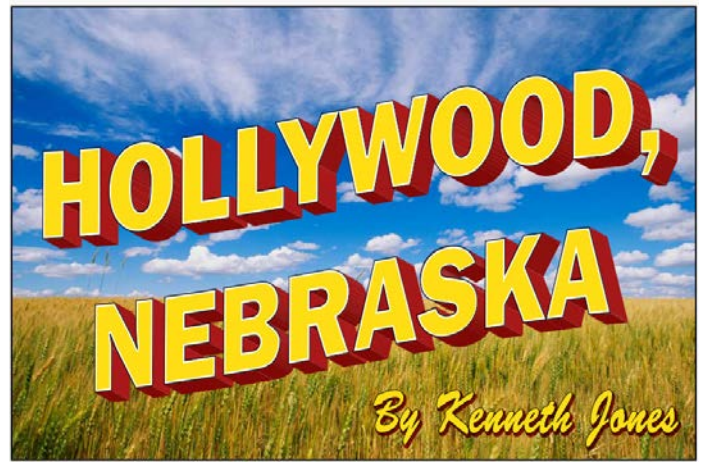
The Monologue Competition is an add-on event for AACTFest 2023. You can register with your online festival registration or by contacting **info@aact.org**. There will be a youth division and adult division. Participation is limited, so early registration is highly recommended.

Design Competition
Virtual or Onsite Displays - \$35
aact.org/design23

The AACT National Design Competition showcases the best of community theatre in this country. AACT member theatres and their designers may enter designs in five categories for projects occurring between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2023. Cash prizes for top designs in each category.

Accommodations

The Hyatt Regency Louisville will serve as the festival and conference headquarters, and is within walking distance of the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts and Actors Theatre of Louisville. (A trolley will also be available to transport those staying at the hotel to the festival theatre.) The Hyatt is just steps from the Fourth Street Live District, Louisville's premier dining



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An AACTFest 2023 National
Festival preliminarily schedule
is available at

aact.org/23

and entertainment destination, and conveniently located next to the Kentucky International Convention Center and close to the Louisville Slugger Museum.

The Hyatt Regency Louisville is where educational, social, and exhibition events will take place. Please support AACT by staying at the festival hotel. In addition to offering discounted rates to our attendees, this hotel has been carefully vetted to ensure quality service and accessibility.

By staying at the designated festival hotel, you help keep registration costs down for future AACT events.



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Rates & Rooms

- Single Rooms: \$159 +tax
- Double Rooms: \$159 + tax.
- Deadline to reserve: May 29, 2023

Reservations (special AACT rates)

- Online reservation link can be found at:
aact.org/go23
- **Make Reservations by Telephone** Hyatt
Group Reservations: **1-877-803-7534**, AACT
reservation rate code is AAC3 (Do not call the
hotel directly)

Hotel Website:

aact.org/hyatt
(for general information only—not for AACT reservations)

Getting There

With three international airports nearby and within driving distance from many Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast states, Louisville makes it easy for anyone to get there. With more than 120 attractions, Louisville has something for everyone to see and do. With the festival hotel and theatre located right downtown, attendees will be in walking/trolley distance to top-tier restaurants, cultural sites, and shopping.

And for the adults, we can't forget the Bourbon. The Urban Bourbon Experience is comprised of more than 10 distilleries that are open for public tours and tastings. The Urban Bourbon Trail boasts over 35 bars and restaurants with more than 60 bourbons and bourbon-inspired culinary delights. You can download the passport at kybourbontrail.com, collect a stamp from each distillery you visit, and enjoy a special prize at the end.

Mark your calendar to join your colleagues and friends for a great time—and great theatre.

Transportation

To help with travel, AACT has contracted special airline discounts for festival attendees. For more about hotel and travel visit: **aact.org/go23**

Ground Transportation

Uber, Lyft, and taxis are readily available throughout the city.

Once at the Hyatt Regency Louisville, you can walk (.5 mile distance) to the Kentucky Performing Arts Center for the festival performances, take the downtown trolley, or take a taxi.

For more information on getting around town, maps, trolley routes, and area attractions visit:

gotolouisville.com

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photo courtesy of Reno Little Theater



Ben Cameron is AACTFest 2023 Keynote

Broadway veteran Ben Cameron's signature enthusiasm and razor wit will be front and center for his AACTFest 2023 keynote address Friday, June 16, at the Hyatt Regency Louisville. The keynote is open to AACTFest 2023 registrants only.

Cameron appeared in the original casts of *Wicked* and *Footloose*, as well in *Aida*, plus tours of *Sweet Charity* (opposite Molly Ringwald), *State Fair*, *Fame*, *The Who's Tommy*, and *Footloose*. Since hanging up his dance belt he has become one of Broadway's most beloved personalities as creator and host of the long-running variety show *Broadway Sessions* (2018 MAC Award), the *Broadway Buskers* concert series with the Times Square Alliance, the web series *Dance Captain Dance Attack* on BroadwayWorld.com, and the hit podcast, *The Broadway Cast with IHeartRadio Broadway*.

Cameron is also the MainStage host for BroadwayCon and was live-audience host for tapings of both *A Very Wicked Halloween* on NBC and *The Spongebob Musical* on Nickelodeon. He is a frequent face on PBS WNET, having hosted *Hamilton's America*, *Broadway on Thirteen Marathon*, and the *Downton Abbey New Year's Marathon*.

He recently made his return to the stage as the "Man in Chair" in *The Drowsy Chaperone* and starred as "Mr. Finch" in Broadway Green Alliance's online presentation of *You're a Green One, Mr. Finch* alongside Idina Menzel. He has enjoyed sold-out engagements of his one-man show, *Different Is Good*, in New York City and beyond.

Cameron is also a sought-after writer, director, performer, and choreographer, who travels the world, teaching high-energy theatre and dance masterclasses, and emceeing Onstage NY talent competitions.

His keynote will draw on his remarkable career, observations and insight, making for an entertaining and eye-opening experience.

Follow Cameron via [@BenDoesBroadway](https://twitter.com/BenDoesBroadway) or visit [bencameron.nyc](https://www.bencameron.nyc)

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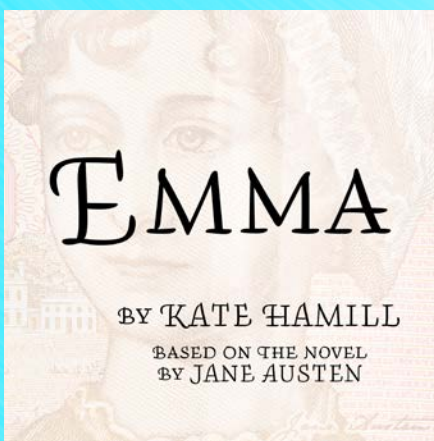
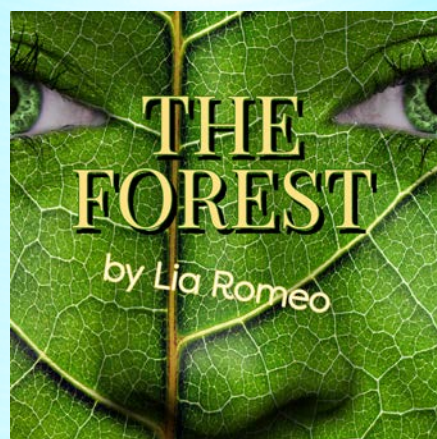
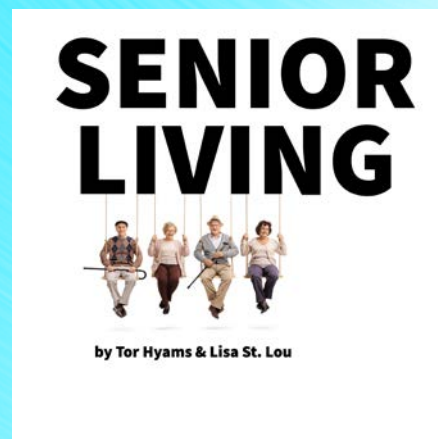
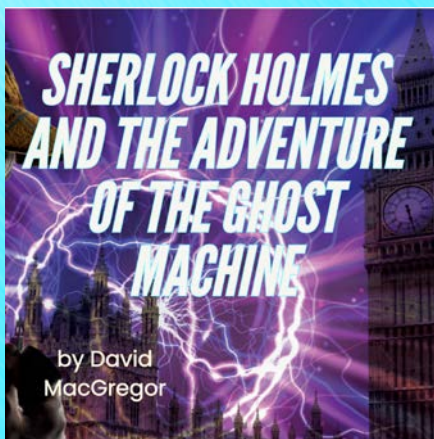
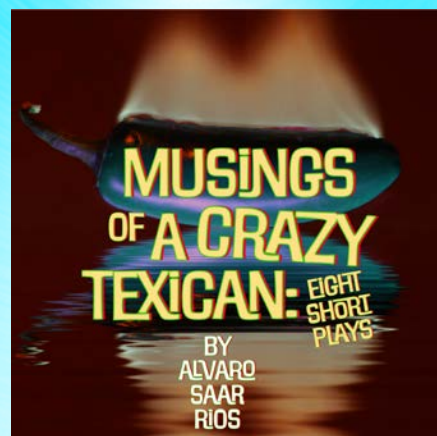
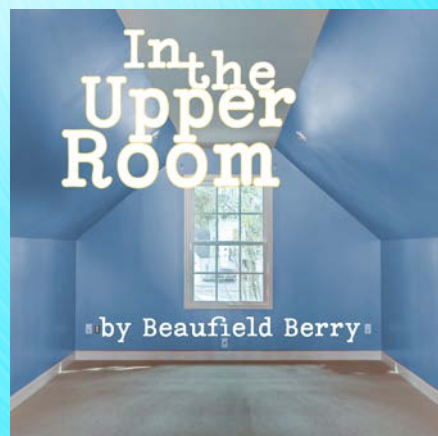
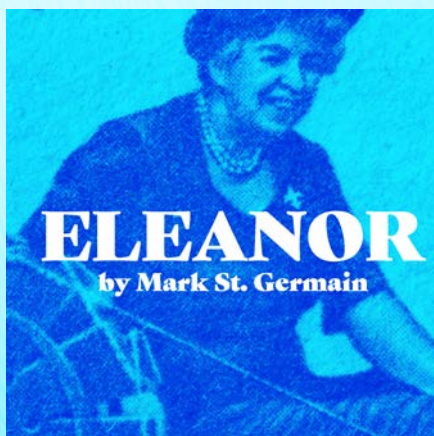
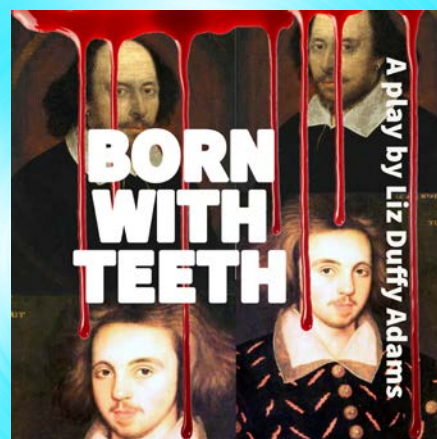
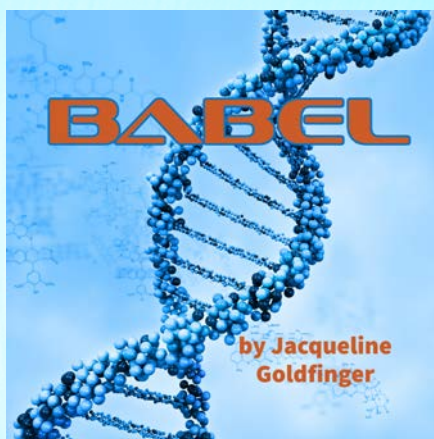
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AACTFest 2023

Adjudicators

The 2023 National AACTFest will feature experienced and nationally known adjudicators. Their comments on productions will be a learning experience for all participating company and audience members.



Gary Anderson is Producing Artistic Director of the Plowshares Theatre Company and a member of the National Advisory Committee of the Black Seed, a first-ever national strategic plan to create impact for Black theater institutions. A 2016 Kresge Artist Fellow, he is a

noted expert in Black Theatre. As a director, he has worked in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and Houston. Among his awards are the Alain Locke Cultural Arts Award from The Friends of African and African American Art, Detroit Institute of Arts; Publisher's Award for Excellence - Between the Lines' Oscar Wilde Awards; the 2002 Michiganian of the Year Award from *The Detroit News*; and The Lawrence DeVine Award for Outstanding Contribution from *The Detroit Free Press*. Gary has served on the board of several local and national theatre organizations, including CultureSource (Michigan), Black Theatre Network (BTN), Theatre Communications Group (TCG), and the National Conference on African American Theatre (NCAAT).



Jeff Calhoun is a Tony nominee for Disney's *Newsies* and Deaf West Theater's *Big River*. He directed both the world premiere and international productions of Disney's *High School Musical: On Stage* and Disney's *High School Musical*

2: *On Stage*. His work on Broadway's *Grease* earned him a Tony Award Nomination for Best Choreography. Jeff is an associate artist at The Ford's Theater in Washington D.C., and serves on the Board of Directors for Covenant House International, a not-for-profit organization that shelters and cares for homeless and trafficked youth in 31 cities, across six countries. He recently directed *A Night of Covenant House Stars* (2020 and 2021) on AmazonPrime. He was a Keynote Speaker for AACTFest 2021.



Faye M. Price is the former Co-Artistic Producing Director of Pillsbury House Theatre and former Co-Director of the Pillsbury House Theatre Cultural Community Hub in Minneapolis, and was a dramaturg at the Guthrie Theater. As an actress, she has appeared at Mixed Blood,

the Guthrie, and Illusion theaters and is a company member of Penumbra Theater. Faye has served as an adjudicator for both AACT and the Minnesota Association of Community Theatres Festival, and was a dramaturgy respondent and judge for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship Audition for the Region V Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. She is the recipient of the 2021 McKnight Foundation Distinguished Artist Award. Faye received her graduate degree from the University of Minnesota.



Rick St. Peter (Alternate Adjudicator) has been a director and educator in professional, academic and community theatre for 25 years. He was a participant in the LaMaMa/Umbria International Directors Symposium in Spoleto, Italy,

and is a recipient of a Princess Grace Foundation Theater Award. He served as the Associate Artistic Director of TheatreVirginia and Barksdale Theatre (now Virginia Repertory Theatre), and Artistic Director of the Actors Guild of Lexington, Kentucky. He received his M.F.A. in Stage Directing from Virginia Commonwealth University, and his Ph.D. in Fine Arts from Texas Tech University. He currently teaches in the I.B. Theatre program at Warwick High School and is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Theatre at Virginia's Christopher Newport University.

Catch the Excitement at AACT YouthFest 2023

AACT is presenting its youth festival as an integral part of AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky, June 12-17, 2023. Five youth theatre companies will perform at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts during the

festival. All YouthFest performances are included in AACTFest 2023 registration.

Below is information on the companies taking part.



The Terrace Playhouse Youth Theatre Troupe

United States Army Garrison,
Ansbach, Germany (AACT Region X)

Death Takes the Train, by D.M. Larson

An empty train car. A group of young people shuffle in and settle into their seats. Then after a pause, the Grim Reaper walks onto the train and sits alone in the train car. The teens now try to figure out what to do next. What would you do?

Ansbach Terrace Playhouse was founded in the 1950s and is part of the U.S. Army Europe Entertainment Program. The theatre serves U.S. soldiers, civilians, retirees, and family members stationed in Ansbach, Germany. The Ansbach Youth Theatre Troupe was founded in 2018 and performed *This Side of Heaven* at the 2019 AACT YouthFest in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

ArmyEuropeEntertainment.com



Blue Springs City Theatre

Blue Springs, Missouri
(AACT Region V)

Mockingbird (Touring Version), adapted by Julie Jensen from the National Book Award-winning novel by Kathryn Erskine

Caitlin has Asperger's. To her the world is black and white; anything else is confusing. Caitlin's brother Devon helped her when things got confusing, but he was killed in a school shooting, and Caitlin's dad is too distraught to help. Caitlin wants everything to go back to normal but doesn't know how.

Blue Springs City Theatre is an independent theatre organization celebrating its 36th year of bringing the gift of live theatre to Blue Springs and eastern Jackson County. Its mission is to support and further the performing arts in a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive environment, providing an outlet for artistic expression and enjoyment for all. **bluespringscitytheatre.com**



Star Center Theatre

Gainesville, Florida
(AACT Region IV)

Once on This Island JR., book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens; music by Stephen Flaherty

Once on This Island JR. is an adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. Through almost non-stop song and dance, this full-hearted musical tells the story of Ti Moune, a peasant girl who rescues and falls in love with Daniel, a wealthy boy from the other side of her island. When Daniel is returned to his people, the fantastical gods who rule the island guide Ti Moune on a quest that will test the strength of her love against the powerful forces of prejudice, hatred, and even death.

Star Center Youth Theatre was founded in the summer of 2000 to provide arts education and performance opportunities for a diverse group of youth in the community. The small program was started without any resources or funding, but with a strong desire to expose and provide cultural opportunities to marginalized communities. Over the years the program has expanded to a full year of classes, workshops, and performances. The Star Center Theatre and the Founder have received national, regional, and statewide awards and recognitions for their work in its communities. **starcentertheater.org**



Theatre33

Bellevue, Washington
(AACT Region IX)

A Game, by Dennis E. Noble

Three people accept an invitation to take part in an experimental game. As the game progresses, we witness the drive that makes each human want to possess more than their neighbors—a drive that causes hatred ... and starts wars.

From contemporary plays to beloved classics, **Theatre33** strives to provide quality live productions that speak to the heart of audience members, evoke current social problems and eternal ethical questions, and tackle the complex matrix of human relationships. Since 2013, this bilingual theater has provided a unique platform for transplanted immigrants and next-generation Americans to retain and maintain their connection to history, literature, and language. At the same time, it serves as a cultural hub that unites diverse cultures and ages through the love of dramatic arts. theatre33wa.org



Verona Area Community Theater

Verona, Wisconsin
(AACT Region III)

Silent Sky, by Lauren Gunderson

When Henrietta Leavitt joins the Harvard Observatory in the early 1900s, she joins a group of women charting the stars for a renowned male astronomer who has no time for the women's theories. This true story explores a woman's place in society during a time of great scientific discovery.

Verona Area Community Theater (VACT) was founded in 1992 with the goal of providing affordable opportunities for children and adults to engage in and enhance their passions for all facets of theatre. Since that time the organization has grown from three productions to 10-12 productions each season. At least five productions are for youth only and in 2022 VACT began a senior theater program, completely cast with actors aged 55 and over. VACT is still run almost entirely by volunteers, from production to administration to cast, but its number-one priority is still to have fun. vact.org

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2023 Youth Theatre Conference

Building Arts Leaders through the
Power of Theatre

The **2023 AACT Youth Theatre Conference** will take place in conjunction with AACTFest 2023 and YouthFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky, this June.

The Youth Theatre Conference is for young people, ages 12-18, who aspire to be leaders within the arts and theatre communities. Participants will be exposed to a line-up of powerful theatre performances from around the country, engage in educational workshops, receive mentoring and shadowing from arts professionals, and take part in activities that are both challenging and fun.



Youth share positive energy as they participate in Youth Fest/Youth Theatre Conference 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Space is limited, so early registration is recommended. More information is available at **aact.org/youthconf**

After registering, participants will receive a survey to help AACT create individual schedules that reflect their specific interests.

At the 2023 Youth Theatre Conference, young artists will:

- Meet and work with other youth from around the country
- Learn from professionals in the industry
- See the best of community theatre from around the country

Because the Youth Theatre Conference is held in conjunction with AACTFest and YouthFest, participants will get access to over a dozen exciting productions from theatre organizations across the country. You'll enjoy comedies, dramas, and musicals, from both adult and youth production companies.

The Youth Theatre Conference will also include workshops on a wide range of topics, including performing, choreography, directing, marketing, and more.



Facilitator **Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton** has served as the facilitator for the AACT Youth Theatre Conferences at AACTFest 2017 and at AACTFest 2019.

Jennifer previously held the position of Education

Director for Topeka Civic Theatre and Academy in Topeka, Kansas. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from Sterling College, and her Master of Arts in Theatre and Film from the University of Kansas.

Register Now!

Register for AACTFest 2023 Youth Theatre Conference when you register for AACTFest 2023. The Youth Conference fee is only \$40, and includes a \$75 discount on AACTFest registration


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Club Morocco

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Scripts, Information, and Licensing at:
summerwindproductions.com

Donate now to the AACT Silent Auction!

Take part in the fun of AACTFest 2023 by contributing a special item to the festival's Silent Auction. Proceeds benefit the AACT Endowment's Festival Support Fund, which helps companies representing their regions with some of their travel expenses to the national festival, or to subsequent international festivals.

Donated items will be on display during AACTFest 2023, both in Louisville and online.

How to Contribute Items

Visit aact.org/auction to submit your donation. (Donations must be received by **June 14, 2023**.)

Items Sought

Donations are requested with a minimum value of \$100 per item, basket, or group of items to be auctioned together. Suggestions for best-sellers:

- Fine jewelry, gourmet candy or chocolate (from your state or region)
- Expert training, services, and goods
- Fine works of art
- Gift certificates for destination experiences or entertainment
- Gift cards to national chain restaurants, department stores, movie theatres, Amazon, etc.
- Or surprise us with something fantastic!



Auction items will be available online and selected items will be on display in Louisville in June. The AACT Silent Auction benefits the AACT Endowment Festival Support Fund



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Schedule Your Donation

Visit aact.org/auction to schedule your donation. Complete the Auction Contribution form or email info@aact.org with a description of the items you are sending, their value, the method you intend to use for delivery, and when they will arrive.

Questions? Contact the AACT office at **817-732-3177** or info@aact.org. Our thanks to all who have already donated.

Ready to Bid?

Auction items will be available to view and purchase online beginning May 2023. Winners are notified at festival's end, and you do not need to be registered for the festival to bid or purchase.

Speak The Speech!

2023 Monologue Competition



Laurel Cooney from Stuttgart Theatre Center performs in the Monologue Competition at AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

An established highlight of the AACTFest national festival, the 2023 Monologue Competition will be no exception—whether you're attending to perform, learn the ropes, or support your fellow actors. In fact, anyone can enter the Monologue Competition.

You can register for the Monologue Competition when you complete your festival registration online. If you're already registered, you may contact the AACT office at **info@aact.org** or **817-732-3177**. (There is a \$25 entry fee.) You can also sign up for the competition during AACTFest at the AACTFest registration desk in the lobby of the Louisville Hyatt Regency. However, the number of participants is limited, so early registration is recommended.

There are two categories, one for those age 18 and under, and one for those over 18. The winner in each category will receive a \$100 prize.

Monologues must be memorized and should come from a published play by an established writer, or a writer who has submitted a new script to a playwriting competition or for publication. You may present a piece of dramatic or comedic material that does not exceed two minutes to perform. No props, costumes, or effects of any kind are permitted.

Participants will be assigned a preliminary-round monologue slot on either Wednesday, June 14, Thursday, June 15, or Friday, June 16. The festival adjudicators will select finalists from the preliminary rounds to perform in the Monologue Competition Finals, and the winner will be announced at Saturday's Awards Ceremony.

This is a unique opportunity to perform individually and receive feedback from an experienced acting teacher and adjudicator to sharpen your skills while you network with other artists.

For more information visit, **aact.org.monologue**

Adjudicators



Ron Cameron-Lewis has adjudicated productions at AACT festivals at state, regional, national, and international levels. His travels on behalf of AACT have taken him to most of the 50 states. Born in Ontario, Ron taught and

coordinated the Music Theatre Department at Sheridan College in Oakville since its inception 48 years ago. Many of his former students now work on Broadway, the West End in London, on cruise ships around the world, and at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and Shaw Festival in Canada. An experienced dramaturg, author, playwright, and workshop leader, Ron's textbook, *Acting Skills for Life*, is in its third printing.



Kristofer Geddie is Venice Theatre's Director of Diversity and General Manager and is in his final semester of graduate school at Goucher College for a Master's in Arts Administration. Prior to Venice, Kris had been

seen performing on stages around the world. He serves on the Ambassador Circle for Embracing our Differences, the EDI council for the Southeastern Theatre Conference, is Treasurer of the Florida Theatre Conference, and Board Member of both the Friends of the Venice Public Library and AACT.

AACT 2023 Design Competition

Plan Now to Showcase Your Design Work at AACTFest 2023



Costume Designs by Katherine Wood for The King and I, produced at St George Musical Theatre, were part of the AACT 2019 Design Competition at AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

The AACT 2023 Design Competition has gone hybrid, allowing entries to be displayed and adjudicated either online or in person during AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky, this June.

Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to showcase your best design work and possibly take home a cash award. Go to aact.org/design23 to view guidelines and display suggestions, as well as the rubric our adjudicators will use when evaluating design entries.

The five Design Competition categories include Scenic, Lighting, Properties, Costume, and Special Design.

Entries must be the work of an AACT Individual Member or be a design used for a production staged by an AACT Organizational Member. Designs must reflect productions staged between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2023.

Adjudicators suggest that those interested should begin collecting sketches, photos, plans, and other materials that can be used in their entry. Entry forms, available at aact.org/design23, must be submitted by **June 12, 2023**.

Space allocation for in-person displays is limited, and entries will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

AACT will award a \$300 prize to the design chosen as Outstanding Overall Design. Competition adjudicators also have the option of awarding prizes of \$100 for Outstanding Design in each of the five categories.



Adjudication Seminar 2023

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

- AACT Adjudication Committee

Over several festival cycles, AACT's Adjudication Seminar has provided adjudication training in both virtual and in-person formats. In 2023, AACT is combining the benefits of both formats in a hybrid model designed to maximize the experience.

The Adjudication Seminar will begin with six virtual sessions, two and a half hours each, scheduled March through May, 2023. Once participants have completed the virtual training, they will view the performances first-hand at the National Festival in Louisville, and respond to them with techniques learned in training, receiving feedback from the seminar instructor that is designed to polish both message and delivery. In-person sessions during the festival will also include how to negotiate with fellow adjudicators to determine award outcomes, and how to prepare for work as an adjudicator.





The AACT Adjudication Seminar includes in-person sessions at the AACTFest National Festival. Seminar Instructor Kathy Pingel explains the importance of positivity in adjudicating at the AACT Adjudication Seminar held at AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania





Seminar Instructor **Kristi Quinn** will be joined by other nationally recognized adjudicators, who will drop in for coaching and to address specific topics. Kristi is AACT President, and has adjudicated at festivals at many levels.

Join us for the AACT 2023 Adjudication Seminar! For registration information, visit **aact.org/seminar**, as well as information on two BIPOC scholarships for the seminar to support and mentor theatre-makers of color.

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Moving On

Theatres recently selected to represent their states/regions

State winners moving on to their regional festival are shown below. Some states qualify to send two shows to their regional festival. Winners of the regional festivals will move on to the national festival in Louisville, Kentucky.

Productions advancing to the AACTFest national festival are in bold type. See all theatres representing states and regions in the AACTFest 2023 cycle at [**aact.org/moving**](https://aact.org/moving)

Region	Org Name	City	State/Country	Play	Author
X	The Amelia Earhart Playhouse	Wiesbaden	Germany	<i>The Book of Leviticus and Medea</i>	Christopher Durang
II	Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop	South Fallsburg	NY	<i>Benevolent Alliance of Mourners</i>	Ken Preuss
IV a	Playhouse in the Park	Murray	KY	<i>Wanda's Visit</i>	Christopher Durang
IV b	Augusta Players	Augusta	GA	<i>Sister Act, Jr.</i>	Music by Alan Menkin, Lyrics by Glenn Slater, Book by Cheri Steinkellner and Bill Steinkellner
IV b	St Marys Children's Theatre, Inc. DBA Saltwater Performing Arts	St. Marys	GA	<i>The SpongeBob Musical: Youth Edition</i>	Kyle Jarrow, Musical Production conceived by Tina Landau, Original Songs By Yolanda Adams, Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith, Sara Bareilles, Jonathan Coulton, Alex Ebert of Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeros, The Flaming Lips, Lady Antebellum, Cyndi Lauper, John Legend, Panic! At The Disco, Plain White T's, They Might Be Giants, T.I and Songs by David Bowie, Tom Kenny & Andy Paley, Additional Lyrics by Jonathan Coulton, Additional Music by Tom Kitt, Musical Production Conceived by Tina Landau
IV b	The Community Playhouse of Lancaster County	Lancaster	SC	<i>WASP</i>	Steve Martin
IV b	Wetumpka Depot Players	Wetumpka	AL	<i>A Storm Came Up</i>	Kristy Meanor and Doug Segrest
IV b	Theatre Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa	AL	<i>Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108)</i>	Michael Higgins

Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC)

Coming June 2023



Participants of the 2019 CTMC shown after sharing experiences and enjoying the conference prior to AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, PA

AACT's annual Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC) returns to an in-person format, June 11-13, in Louisville, Kentucky, prior to AACTFest 2023.

CTMC is open to administrators at all levels, so whether you're a full-time professional manager, a part-time office administrator, a board member, or that dedicated volunteer who does it all, you are invited and welcome to attend.

Participants will gain valuable insight, best practices, and new perspectives through a customized series of intensive, topic-specific, large and small group discussions that speak directly to your unique challenges and experiences. A pre-conference questionnaire identifies and prioritizes topics for discussions, including challenges and traditional topics such as:

- Sales and marketing
- Other sources of earned income
- Fundraising and development
- Event planning
- Season and play selections
- Volunteers
- Education and outreach
- Box office operations
- Board
- Reopening
- and more!



CTMC is facilitated by **Chad-Alan Carr**, Founding Executive/Artistic Director of the Gettysburg (PA) Community Theatre. Chad serves on the AACT Board of Directors, and was Chair of the AACT National Youth

Festival at AACTFest 2017 and AACTFest 2019. His accomplishments include directing the Eastern States Regional Premiere of The Penguin Project (theatre for youth with special needs) and serving as a board member for the Pennsylvania Association of Community Theatres and Eastern States Theatre Association, as well as AACT. A frequent presenter at AACTFests and panelist in AACT Roundtables, he brings to CTMC a wealth of experience and an ability to create dynamic group interactions.

Registration*	By June 1, 2023	After June 1, 2023
AACT Member	\$285	\$315
Non-Member	\$360	\$390
*AACTFest attendees receive a \$15 discount.		

Conference attendees can receive the same discounts on hotel and airline rates as AACTFest attendees. Additional information and registration at: **aact.org/ctmc**.

A Look into the Future

Theatre Tuscaloosa's World Premiere of *Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108)*

It's the year 2108 and brilliant engineer Jada is eager to escape our troubled planet by blasting off on a risky mission to colonize another world. Ex-boyfriend Zegg, however, believes the Earth—and their relationship—can be saved.

That's the first scene of Michael Higgins' *Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108)*, which received its AACT NewPlayFest world premiere October 21 at Theatre Tuscaloosa in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.



Jada (Margaret Carr) prepares for her departure to start a new colony on another planet, as her romantic partner Zegg (Gabriel M. Carden) experiences difficulties with his new robotic arm in the Theatre Tuscaloosa production of Launch Day (Love Stories for the Year 2108)

Zegg's mission is to convince Jada to stay—and hope that his new robotic arm doesn't ruin everything.

Under the direction of Tina Turley (who is also Theatre Tuscaloosa's Executive Producer) six couples navigate a high-tech but perilous future in this science-fiction comedy. In a series of connected stories, the couples encounter everything from spiteful computers to brain-controlling advertisements, to bizarre new animals. And as the launch clock counts down, they search for ways to make it all work.

"It is always exciting as a producer and director to get to do a new work," Turley said. "I have been a part of bringing new works to life in many of the various stages in my career. Michael Higgins' script is new and fresh, and it allows younger actors to really explore the arc of



a character and relationships. It's wonderful having the playwright there to see how his story has been brought to life."

Playwright Higgins notes that *Launch Day* was written so it could be performed on a budget, "but Tina Turley and her team blew me away by building an impressive set and making fun, clever props," he said. "When I wrote the play, I wasn't sure exactly what a 'proton hammer' would look like. Thanks to Tina and her designers, now I know."

Tuscaloosa audiences were not the only ones to be charmed by the show on opening night. In addition to the playwright and his wife, Lisa, also in attendance were Janet Saulter from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation (which generously sponsors AACT NewPlayFest), Linda Habjan from Dramatic Publishing Company (which publishes anthologies of NewPlayFest's winning scripts), and AACT NewPlayFest Dramaturg Kathy Pingel. All said they were fortunate to be there to celebrate the partnership of Michael Higgins and Theatre Tuscaloosa and the creation of an exciting production.



The evening included a pre-show talkback with director Tina Turley, playwright Michael Higgins, and AACT Dramaturg Kathy Pingel

As with all AACT NewPlayFest world premiere productions, a workshop with the director, cast, playwright, and AACT Dramaturg was held during the rehearsal period. Playwright Higgins called the AACT workshop process “invaluable,” noting that he was able to “travel to Tuscaloosa for three nights of rehearsals, meet with Tina, and answer questions posed by her wonderful actors. At the end of the workshop, I think we all had a solid grasp of what the production could be.”

Director Tina Turley had a similarly positive experience: “It was great to bounce ideas off of Michael, but he also allowed us to follow our vision of his play. I paid particular attention to his stage directions (not unlike when you direct Tennessee Williams), as well as his phrasing and word choices. What a gift this was for our actors—some of them students—who got to be a part of something larger than the usual process of producing a play, which is tough enough as it is.”

For Higgins, the highlight of the process was working with AACT Dramaturgs Kathy Pingel and David VanCleave. “Kathy is a fountain of keen observations and wise advice. Both she and David are the sort of smart collaborators who spot every issue and offer not just critiques, but possible solutions. At the same time, they’re careful to leave all final script decisions in the hands of the playwright.”

Turley thanked AACT “for creating the NewPlayFest itself, Dramatic Publishing for their support, and of course the Ayres Theatre Foundation and their generous contribution to the cause of bringing new work to life. It was hard work, and it was absolutely worth it. Theatre Tuscaloosa is so very thankful to be a part of a community of artists who love the theatre and want to see it thrive in the future!”



Opening Night of the AACT NewPlayFest 2022 production of Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108), by Michael Higgins, at Theatre Tuscaloosa in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Front row, seated (left to right): Kim Palm (House Manager), Steven Yates (cast), DeAnthony Mays (cast), Michael Higgins (Playwright), Gabriel M. Carden (cast), Sam Hodo (cast), Brandy Johnson (cast)

Middle row, seated (left to right): Ebony Wesley (cast), Hallie Grace Hamner (cast), Amaria Jackson (cast), Mileidy Crespo-Jones (cast), Margaret Carr (cast), Kazarious Brown (cast) Theatre Tuscaloosa Board (cast, Theatre Tuscaloosa Board)

Back row (left to right): Ashlyn Lambert (Stage Manager), Wheeler Kincaid (Technical Director), Jeanette Waterman (Costume Designer), Dianna Shaw (House Manager), Jessica Briana Kelly (cast), Adam Miller (Theatre Tuscaloosa Managing Director), Kathy Pingel (AACT Dramaturg), David Cruz-Urbe (Theatre Tuscaloosa Board), David Cockerell (AACT Marketing/Communications Director), Cooper Shattuck (Theatre Tuscaloosa Board President), Janet Salters (Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation), Cathy Lee (Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation), Tina Turley (Director, Theatre Tuscaloosa Executive Producer), Ellie DeFreese (Assistant Stage Manager), Linda Habjan (Vice President of Acquisitions, Dramatic Publishing), Charles Prosser (Sound/Prop Designer)

continued on next page

About the Theatre

Theatre Tuscaloosa, one of the largest community theatres in Alabama, works in partnership with Shelton State Community College to provide quality theatrical experiences to the citizens of West Alabama through performances, workshops, and classroom instruction. Theatre Tuscaloosa was founded in 1971 as the Tuscaloosa Community Players and became Theatre Tuscaloosa in the 1980s. The company then forged an alliance with Shelton State, and in the 1990s raised funds to complete construction of a fine arts center on the college's new Martin Campus. In exchange, Shelton State named Theatre Tuscaloosa as its resident company.



Janet Saulter of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation presents a check to Tina Turley, Theatre Tuscaloosa Executive Producer and Cooper Shattuck, Theatre Tuscaloosa Board of Directors President on opening night of the world premiere of *Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108)*, October 21, 2022, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

About the Playwright

Michael Higgins is a Chicago writer and playwright whose comedy *Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108)* has received staged readings at Benchmark Theatre in Denver, Capital Stage in Sacramento, and Chicago Dramatists in Chicago. His play *The Chip* has been produced in New York and Chicago, and appears in the Smith & Kraus anthology, *The Best Ten-Minute Plays 2018*. His play *Tracy and Her Dream Guys* was published in *The Best New Ten-Minute Plays 2019*, from Rowman & Littlefield. Higgins is a former legal affairs reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* and has a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania. A Cleveland-area native, he has also worked as a garbage collector, sewer cleaner, and "assistant to the guy who scrapes roadkill off the highway."

Theatre Tuscaloosa participated in the Alabama State Festival with a cutting of *Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108)* and was selected to advance to the AACT Region IV festival to be held during the SETC Convention, March 1-5, 2023, in Louisville, Kentucky. Congratulations Theatre Tuscaloosa! See all advancing AACTFest 2023 productions at aact.org/moving

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Memories and Milestones

Midland Community Theatre's World Premiere, *Of Men and Cars*

The AACT NewPlayFest world premiere of Jim Geoghan's *Of Men and Cars* opened October 21, 2022, at Midland Community Theatre (MCT) in Midland, Texas. The touching coming-of-age comedy opened to sold-out audiences and earned rave reviews from audiences and critics alike during its four-week run.

MCT is participating in NewPlayFest for the first time, but has a long history of presenting original works.

"For over 20 years, Midland Community Theatre hosted the McLaren Comedy Competition, and produced the winning production in our membership season," explains Executive Director Tim Jebson. "With that competition on hiatus, MCT was seeking other ways to find and produce original works for our members. We were thrilled to be selected by AACT to participate in NewPlayFest, producing Jim Geoghan's original work."

Of Men and Cars chronicles a son's relationship with his World War II-veteran father (and their family Ford), based on the playwright's own life from the age of four through his late twenties.

"Yes, I stole my father's car and hit a tree when I was four. Yes, I hung out with Dad at bars when I was five," Geoghan has explained, referencing some of the script's opening moments. "We were pals. I learned a lot from Dad—like how to tell Mom that we did not go to a bar!"



Mom (Jeri Morgan), Jim (Daniel Collins), and Dad (Daryl Berry) on a family trip in the Midland Community Theatre production of *Of Men and Cars*

Geoghan's gift of comedy has earned him multiple Emmy and Drama Desk Award nominations and is on full display in *Of Men and Cars*. It's his most personal

play, balancing humor with the harsh realities of family relationships and growing up.

"As a child, I thought my father was amazing," he writes. "As a teenager, I discovered he was not so amazing and, worse than that, I let him know it. But as I became an adult, I began to realize I was also not as amazing as I thought, and I made up with my father before it was too late."

The AACT NewPlayFest process includes a three-day workshop during which the director and cast work directly with the playwright and the NewPlayFest dramaturg. The Q&A session with Jim Geoghan helped the actors see the real-life Jim and learn more about his process in writing the script. Perhaps the most enlightening moment came when Jeri Morgan, who plays Jim's mother (as well as other characters), asked why the role of Mother was so small. Geoghan's answer was direct and to the point: "Because I didn't have to say I was sorry to her."

As much as this is the playwright's own story, the themes are universal, which is why dramaturg Kathy Pingel arranged for a workshop session with social psychologist Dr. Caitlin Powell. This gave the actors the opportunity to explore motivation with questions like, how does a person stay married to someone who went to war a happy person but came back broken and angry? "The answer took into consideration the time period, the traditional role of women, and how long-term withholding of affection changes a person," Pingel explains. "In addition, Dr. Powell's knowledge of predictable behaviors in people who have had similar experiences gave actors insights and choices."

Other topics explored with Dr. Powell included the socially prescribed set of ideas of what it means to be a man, and developmental milestones in young people, such as the onset of abstract thinking that allows for the questioning of everyone and everything.

Executive Director Tim Jebson said that the play's director, Ben Spencer, and his actors found the weekend workshop very helpful for their rehearsal process, welcoming the chance to dig deeper into the play and its characters.

continued on next page

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The opening night audience included several NewPlayFest representatives, including AACT President Kristi Quinn and Education Coordinator David A. VanCleave, Carrie Blomquist from Dramatic Publishing Company, and Linda Lee from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation, which sponsors the festival.



*Midland Community Theatre Executive Director Tim Jebsen receives a check from Linda M. Lee of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation on opening night of the world premiere of *Of Men and Cars*, October 21, 2022, in Midland, Texas*

About the Playwright

Jim Geoghan's play *Only Kidding* ran off-Broadway for two years and was nominated for two Drama Desk Awards, including best play. *Light Sensitive* has had 80 productions and was nominated for the Joseph Jefferson Award in Chicago. Other plays include *King of City Island*, *Two Gentlemen of Corona*, and *Ug the Caveman Musical*, for which he wrote book and lyrics. Geoghan also writes and produces television. He created *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* for the Disney Channel and was nominated twice for Emmy Awards. Other television credits include writing for *Family Matters*, *Silver Spoons*, and *Facts of Life*.

About Midland Community Theatre

Founded by Art Cole, Midland Community Theatre (MCT) marked its 75th anniversary in 2020. MCT produces musicals, comedies, dramas, mysteries, melodramas, and children's theatre in three performance spaces, along with diverse educational classes and programming. The company's annual programming includes a membership season of nine productions; a Summer Mummers fundraiser for the theatre's operating fund (since 1949); a theatre school offering after-school classes; the Pickwick Players, offering teen classes, workshops, and three productions; Applause Players, a drama therapy program for youth with autism and their families; and Centerstage, an after-school project for teenagers who are not involved in Pickwicks.



*Opening night of the AACT NewPlayFest 2022 production on *Of Men and Cars*, by Jim Geoghan, at Midland Community Theatre in Midland Texas*

Front row (left to right): Carrie Blomquist (Professional Leasing Director, Dramatic Publishing Company), Kristi Quinn (AACT Board President), Daryl Berry (cast), Daniel Collins (cast), Jeri Morgan (cast), Linda M. Lee (Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation), David A. VanCleave (AACT Education Coordinator, AACT Dramaturg)

Middle row (left to right): Ben Spencer (Director), Brent Mealer (cast), Elijah Rivera (cast), Brandon Thomason (cast), Melanie Collins (cast)

Back row (left to right): Sarah January (cast), Natalie Lopez (Sound Operator), Joel Lopez (Light Operator), Sarah Cotton (Stage Manager)

A Look Back:

AACT NewPlayFest 2022 World Premieres



The 2022 AACT NewPlayFest cycle began with the world premiere production of ***Escaping the Labyrinth***, by Thomas H. Hirschak, at **Des Moines Playhouse** in Des Moines, Iowa, October 15-24, 2021.

The 2022 cycle continued with ***Unpacking Mother***, by Karen Schaeffer, at **Market House Theatre** in Paducah, Kentucky, February 10 – 20, 2022.

MLM is for Murder (Or, Your Side Hustle is Killing Us), by John Bavoso, played **Midland Center for the Arts/Center Stage Theatre** in Midland, Michigan, February 25 – 27, 2022.

The Cafe Mocha Murders, by Deanna Strasse, was produced at **Golden Chain Theatre** in Oakhurst, California, March 25 – April 10, 2022.

AACT NewPlayFest 2022 concluded with ***Of Men and Cars***, by Jim Geoghan, at **Midland Community Theatre** in Midland, Texas, October 21 – November 12, 2022, and ***Launch Day (Love Stories from the Year 2108)***, by Michael Higgins, at **Theatre Tuscaloosa** in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, October 21 – 30, 2022.

Felicity (Ashley Potts) works to become rich by going live online to sell dresses and leggings for Linen and Fate, a home business, in MLM is for Murder (Or Your Side Hustle is Killing Us), by John Bavoso, at Midland Center for the Arts



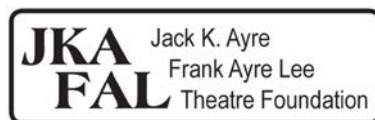
Veteran barista Ivy (Kaley Marsh) makes The Devil's Joe, an infamous secret coffee drink and possible murder weapon in Café Mocha Murders, by Deanna Strasse, at Golden Chain Theatre



Bud Schliemann, standing right, (Nick Cornelison) begins his journey when he meets Herman (Tyler Robinson), seated at a café in Delphi, Greece, in 1951. Herman shares the belief that Greek deities are continuing to live among citizens throughout the world. It turns out to be true in Escaping the Labyrinth, by Thomas H. Hirschak, at Des Moines Playhouse



After not speaking for years, sisters Kathryn (Anna Tamaoka) and Cassie (Amber Dawn) begin to mend their broken relationship by evaluating and sorting their late mother's hoarded possessions in Unpacking Mother, by Karen Schaeffer, at Market House Theatre



The Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation provides a grant that helps make AACT NewPlayFest possible. The Foundation was 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 AACT NewPlayFest, in presenting and promoting new theatre works. For more information, visit aact.org/newplayfest.



Dramatic Publishing Company publishes AACT NewPlayFest's winning plays in anthologies, and licenses production rights for the winning plays. Visit aact.org/dpc for direct links to Dramatic Publishing Company's NewPlayFest anthologies and plays, plus information about discounts and special offers for AACT members.

Storytelling Through Design

Six Tips for Big Designs on Any Budget

During her recent Virtual Masterclass, “Making Something Out of Nothing: Big Designs/Tiny Budgets,” presenter Susanna Douthit shared tips and strategies for effective storytelling through design—regardless of budget. Below are some of her top tips, edited from her presentation.

On Volunteers

Greet them, welcome them, and introduce them to the team. I've seen it happen too many times that people volunteer their time and are never introduced to others in the theatre. If those in charge are too busy to do it, make *that* somebody's volunteer job—to introduce people and explain their jobs. It will go a long way in making volunteers feel welcome and want to return. It will also make them more effective in their own tasks.

30 Feet and Wiggling

Your workers will feel more successful if you explain (or remind them) of the “30 Feet and Wiggling” rule. Helpers can easily get bogged down in minor details and are then disappointed when they don't see it in the production. Audience attention is on actors who are 30 feet away and moving. Encourage your team to prioritize the things that are going to be seen and make a difference in the story.

reflecting light in a beautiful and very inexpensive way. It was so simple but added so much to the audience's experience. Sound is another simple and effective way to move the audience. Whether it's music or sound effects that reflect the story or setting, it can really set the tone from the minute the audience enters the venue.

Tell Your Version of the Story

If you don't have the budget to do every aspect of a full-blown production, decide early which design category gets the lion's share of the time and money. Sometimes, by having a super-simple set and dedicating more money to elaborate costumes, you get more bang for your buck. Or vice versa. Determine what the story is really about and use *that* to drive your choices. Pick the thing that is the most important visually and put your efforts into that. Finesse the other elements in a simpler, pared-down way while still communicating your story and honoring *your* version of this world.

Indicate—Don't Re-create

Whether you are doing a period piece or a popular musical, don't try to recreate the historical era or the iconic scenes. Indicate them, instead.

The Color Wheel is your Friend, People!

Make effective use of color. If you want a color to really pop, light it with an analogous color. For example, If you want red or orange to pop, light it with purple. It's almost neon; it's fabulous. Just make sure your costume designer and lighting designer are communicating with each other and, whenever possible, test things out first!



The 2019 Cloris Leachman Excellence in Theatre Arts Award for Best Costume Design was awarded to Susanna Douthit for her work on Iowa Stage Theatre Company's production of *The Lion in Winter*.

Do Something, Even if it's Simple

Lights, sets, costumes, props, sound—these are the design elements to take the audience on their journey, so use them. You can bring in all of them at any budget, just be creative. One of the most beautiful twinkle effects I've ever seen was done by simply hanging filament line and wrapping tiny balls of tin foil around it. The movement of the actors would cause them to sway just slightly,



About the Masterclass presenter

Susanna Douthit has designed costumes, props, and sets on budgets of all sizes. She has designed costumes for Olympic figure skating champion Brian Boitano, Ballet Nacional del Perú, the world premiere of Our Town the Opera, and countless community theatres and drag queens.

About AACT Virtual Masterclasses

AACT Virtual Masterclasses are 75 to 90-minute, in-depth explorations of specific skills or topics, offered every other month. Registration is \$15 for AACT Members; \$25 for non-members. Visit aact.org/masterclass

AACT National Awards Nominations

Closes January 20, 2023

AACT National Awards recognize outstanding contributions to community theatre, and the 2023 Awards will be presented in June at AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky.



Dr. Roger Ellis of Grand Rapids, Michigan accepts the 2022 Mort Clark International Achievement Award from AACT Board members Chris Serface and Jon Douglas Rake during aactWORLDVEST 2022 in Venice, Florida

Visit aact.org/national to submit a nomination by the deadline, **January 20, 2023**.

Anyone may nominate a candidate for a National Award. To submit a nomination uniquely suited to your theatre "hero," visit the AACT website for criteria for each award, a list of previous award recipients, and the online nomination form. aact.org/national

AACT bestows 10 major recognitions, each focused on a different area of service, to honor those who have contributed significantly to community theatre nationwide:

- Art Cole Lifetime of Leadership Award
- David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award
- Diamond Crown Organization Award
- Distinguished Merit Award
- Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award
- Mort Clark International Achievement Award
- Shining Star Award
- Special Recognition Award
- Twink Lynch Organizational Achievement Award
- Corporate Award

The AACT Awards Committee encourages community theatres to consider nominating individuals of all ages for those awards whose criteria are based on merit rather than age or length of service.

Spotlight Awards

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

New AACT Region Representative



The AACT Board of Directors welcomes **Marc C. Edson** as the new AACT Region VIII Representative for Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Guam.

Marc has been with Chico Theater Company in Chico, California, since its

inception in 2003, serving as both Executive Director and Artistic Director.

A resident of Chico, located in the Northern Sacramento Valley, Marc's career includes seven years in Hollywood as a casting director for background artists (extras) in movies and television shows. Stage directing credits include *Mamma Mia*, *White Christmas*, *A Christmas Story*, *The Sound of Music*, *Oklahoma*, and *Singing in the Rain*. Acting credits include *Fiddler on the Roof* (Tevye), *The Odd Couple* (Oscar Madison), *South Pacific* (Emile Debecque), *My Fair Lady* (Henry Higgins), and Chico Theater Company's premiere show, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Adam Pontipee).

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Due to space, only contributions over \$50 are listed above. Visit the website for a complete list: aact.org/donations

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Dane Winters, IMCOM Entertainment Program Manager, accepts the American Association of Community Theatre Spotlight Award from AACT Executive Director Quiana Clark-Roland,. Also pictured is Ron Ziegler, AACT international adjudicator

Spotlight Award

On October 9, in Sembach, Germany, the U.S. Army IMCOM Europe Entertainment was awarded with an AACT Spotlight Award by AACT Executive Director Quiana Clark-Roland, in recognition of its dedication to outstanding and innovative international theatre. IMCOM Europe Entertainment Program Manager and AACT Region X Representative Dane Winters accepted the award.

"In addition to its work on behalf of international theatre, the honor also recognizes IMCOM staff's support of their communities," Clark-Roland said.

The award presentation took place following the 27th annual One-Act Play Festival and Youth FEST '22 Awards ceremony at USAG Ansbach's Terrace Playhouse. Led by Installation Management Command Europe's G9 Army Entertainment, the event brought together community theatres from across Europe.

For over 70 years, U.S. Army Entertainment has offered U.S. service members, civilians and their families opportunities to participate in and enjoy high-quality music and theatre programs while serving overseas.

Since 1997 the U.S. Army Entertainment Programs have been producing and competing in the AACT Region X Festival.

"Our shows have also done very well at AACTFest national festivals" said Dane Winters, "winning several awards and bringing our program a lot of national attention."

Make a Legacy Gift

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

To learn more about AACT's Legacy Society, visit aact.org/legacy or contact the AACT office at info@aact.org



Upcoming AACT Webinars

AACT Webinars offer a collection of virtual programming designed to benefit theatre organizations and individual artists across the nation, regardless of location or budget size. Below are some of the upcoming **Roundtables**, **Virtual Masterclasses**, **Industry Connections**, and **Script Club** sessions.

All events begin at 2:00 PM (Eastern) / 1:00 PM (Central) 12:00 PM (Mountain) / 11:00 AM (Pacific). For complete details and registration info, please visit aact.org/webinars.

Script Club: *Clue: On Stage*, by Sandy Rustin, adapted from the screenplay by Jonathan Lynn

Thursday, January 5

\$10 for AACT Members

Join playwright Sandy Rustin for an engaging and enlightening discussion of her popular play, *Clue: On Stage*, based on the popular Paramount Pictures film and Hasbro board game. (Available for licensing through Broadway Licensing, which also makes the script available to read for free at aact.org/clue)

Industry Connections: Arts People

Wednesday, January 11

Free for AACT Members and Non-Members
Presented by Arts People

Arts People is a ticketing, fundraising, and database solution designed and priced specifically for smaller and mid-sized arts organizations. Presenter Jon Bailey will share what's new at Arts People.

Roundtable: Open Topic (All-Volunteer Organizations)

Tuesday, January 17

Free for AACT Members

Connect with other all-volunteer theatres to discuss challenges, strategies, and New Year's resolutions specific to organizations without any paid staff.

Virtual Masterclass: Theatre for the Very Young

Thursday, February 2

\$15 for AACT Members; \$25 for Non-Members

Learn more about producing, writing, and directing Theatre for the Very Young (up to age five).



Photo: Reed Hummell

Presenter Ernie Nolan is Executive Artistic Director at Nashville Children's Theatre who is also an award-winning playwright, director, and choreographer.

As former Artistic Director of Chicago's Emerald City Theatre, he helped create The Little Theatre, the nation's first performance space dedicated exclusively to interactive and immersive theatrical experiences for ages five and under. Nolan's work as a playwright has been featured both nationally and internationally. He has adapted and directed such storybook favorites as Mo Willems' *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, *Dragons Love Tacos*, *If You Take a Mouse to School*, and more. Nolan is on the board of TYA/USA, the leading national organization for the professional field of theatre for children. He is their official representative to ASSITEJ International, a global theatre for young audiences.

Industry Connections: Upstage

Wednesday, February 8

Free for AACT Members and Non-Members
Presented by Upstage

Upstage will show how using its software can save time and money by using one digital tool designed for the stage. Presenter Victor Gulley will go over stage and house manager reports, jobs for production team members, submissions, auditions, and rehearsals, among other features that make it easy to manage your theatre.

Roundtable: Open Topic (Theatres with Paid Staff)

Tuesday, February 21

Free for AACT Members

Connect with theatres to discuss challenges, strategies, and New Year's resolutions specific to organizations with paid staff.

Script Club: *Kinky Boots*,
book by Harvey Fierstein, music and lyrics by
Cyndi Lauper

Thursday, March 2

\$10 for AACT Members

This six-time Tony Award-winning musical is a surefire crowd pleaser with plenty of opportunities for a theatre to flex its artistic muscles with elaborate costumes, exhilarating choreography, and a heartfelt story. Connect with other organizations to strategize on the show's challenges, from finding the diverse actors required, to sourcing the famed boots. (Licensing and free perusal available at mtishows.com/kinky-boots)



For more information and registration
links for all upcoming webinars, visit:
aact.org/webinars

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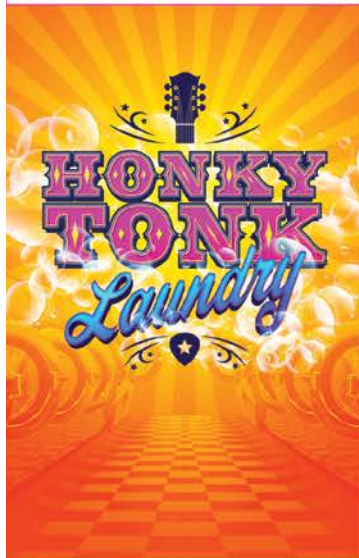
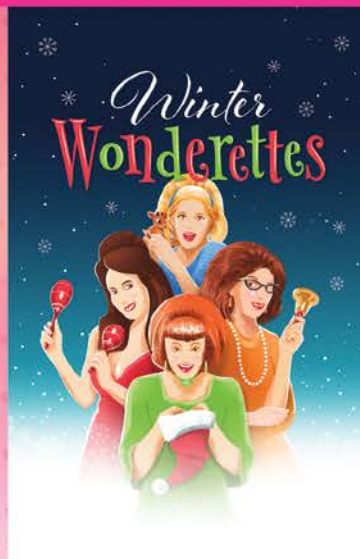
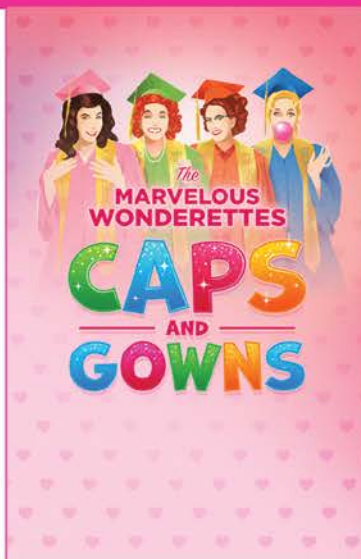
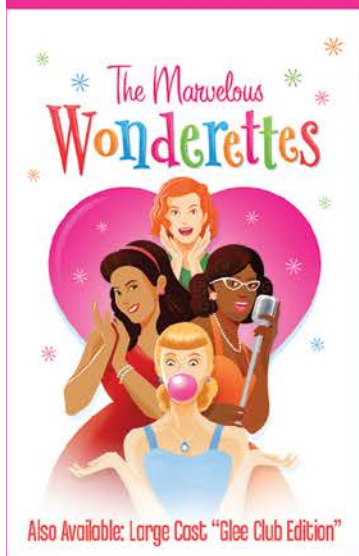
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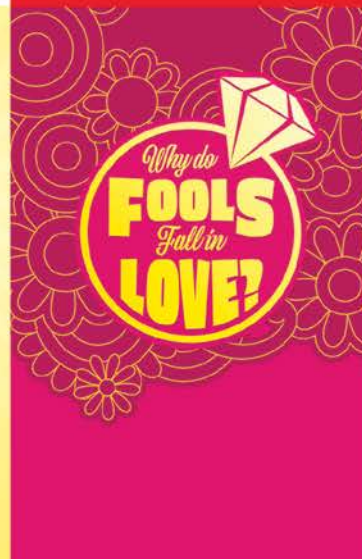
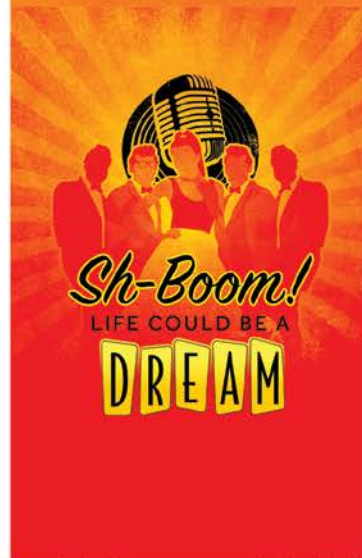


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New Play Contests

June Bingham New Playwright Commission

This commission opportunity provides resources and support toward the creation and development of a new play by early-career women/femme and/non-binary storytellers.

The opportunity will culminate in a 60-minute two-person play that will be workshopped and presented as a reading for an audience at Live & In Color's Fall Retreat in September 2023.

Deadline: January 31, 2023 at 11:59 PM EST

The remuneration for this commission will be \$3,000; housing, meals, and travel for the retreat are also provided.

"Early-career" is defined as artists who have written pieces previously, or have engaged in writing books, film, TV, etc. but have not had extensive theatrical work produced professionally by commercial or non-profit organizations, and fewer than two full-length pieces published in print. Questions about entry eligibility or any portion of the application may be directed to: junebinghamcommission@liveandincolor.org.

The play must be able to be performed with two actors. All submissions should include a short (five-page max) writing sample/excerpt in PDF format. There are no submission or participation fees.

Application: liveandincolor.org/

The International Radio Playwriting Competition 2023

Writers from around the world are invited to submit their scripts for the 28th International Radio Playwriting Competition.

This global competition, hosted by BBC World Service and the British Council, offers the unique opportunity for writers from outside the UK to use the medium of audio drama to tell stories for an international audience.

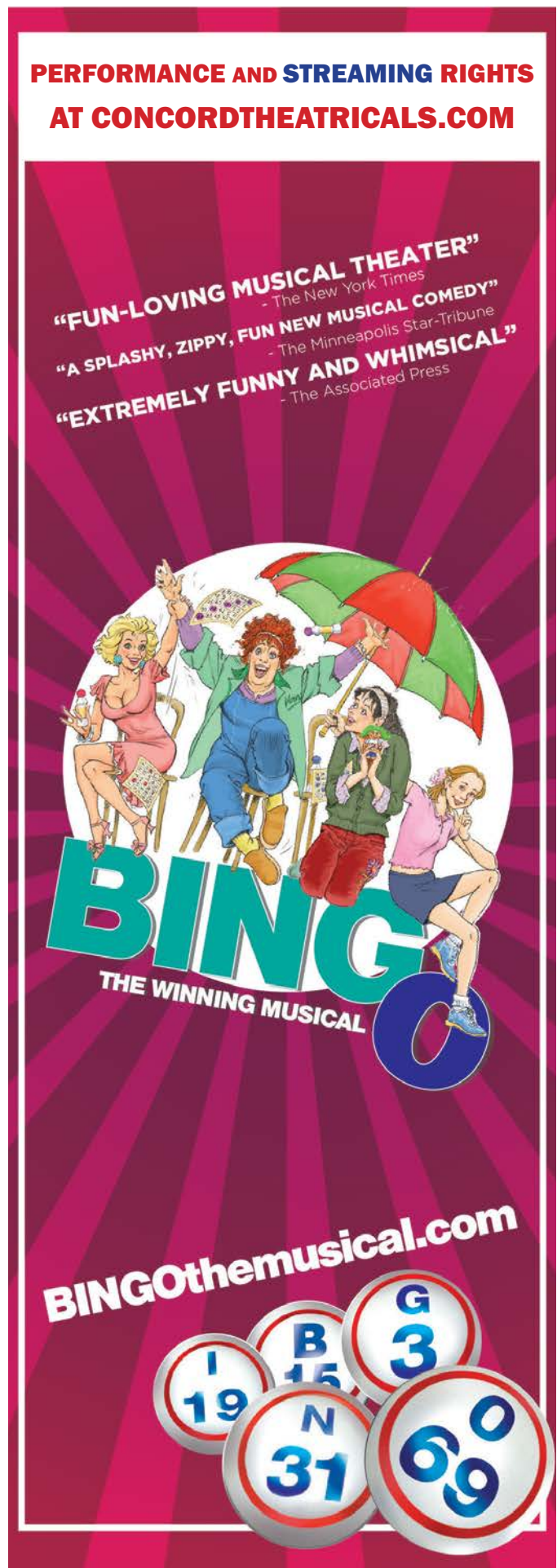
Entries are accepted in two categories: English as a First Language and English as a Second Language. The two first prizes can come from either category.

Both winners will attend an award ceremony in London and see their plays being recorded for broadcast and streaming on BBC World Service. A Special Commendation will be made for the runner-up in honor of the BBC World Service journalist and writer Georgi Markov.

The competition is open only to writers outside the UK. Entrants must be over the age of 18 as of February 12, 2023.

Deadline: February 12, 2023

Competition rules, entry form (accepted by post or email), terms and conditions, privacy notice: aact.org/bbc



AACT On the Road



(left to right) Troy University Associate Professor of Performance Quinton Cockrell (Adjudicator), South City Theatre Board President Lisa Ponder (Festival Co-chair), AACT NewPlayFest Coordinator Susan Austin (Festival Commissioner), Alabama Conference of Theatre Executive Director Cindy Harper (Festival Chair), AACT board member/Market House Theatre Executive Director Michael Cochran (Adjudicator), and AACT Region IV a Representative Lynn Nelson (Adjudicator) shown enjoying the Alabama State Festival held at Theatre Tuscaloosa in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, November 4-5, 2022



(Front row, kneeling, left to right): Victoria Hanrahan (Ansbach Entertainment Director), Dane Winters (IMCOM E Entertainment Program Manager), Ryan Rigazzi (SHAPE Theater Specialist), (Back row, left to right): Alan Buxkemper (Stuttgart Entertainment Director), Quiana Clark-Roland (AACT Executive Director), Nate Records (Wiesbaden Entertainment Director), Jerry Brees (Vicenza Entertainment Director), Naythen Rinehart (KMC Onstage Theatre Specialist), Brett Harwood (SHAPE Entertainment Director), Bob Chung (Ansbach Tech Director) at the AACT Region X Festival/US Army IMCOM Europe Entertainment Festival held at the Terrace Playhouse in Ansbach, Germany, October 7-9, 2022

New Roles

Kelleigh Tanton

Owosso, Michigan

The Lebowsky Center for Performing Arts has welcomed its new Executive Director, Kelleigh Tanton, who began her role in August of 2022. Tanton replaces Kathy Brooks, who had served in the position since 2015. Tanton comes to Lebowsky with a wealth of experience in performing arts management and promotion, most recently as owner of her own concert promotion business. She has served as upper-level management, specializing in marketing at Flint's Whiting Auditorium. Prior to her work at Whiting, Tanton worked at Saginaw's Temple Theatre. A graduate of Northwood University in Midland, Tanton grew up in the thumb area of Michigan.

Congratulations to all those with new roles! It is wonderful to see so many additions our member theatres are making to their staff. If you have someone in a new role at your theatre, email info@aact.org to have your theatre and new staff featured in Spotlight.



Jamie Ulmer

Lawrence, Kansas

Theatre Lawrence's Board of Directors has announced Jamie Ulmer as its new Executive Director. His duties begin officially on March 1, 2023. He will manage not only the day-to-day operations

of the theatre, but also all artistic endeavors as well, according to a news release from Theatre Lawrence. He currently serves as the Managing Artistic Director for the Community Players in Beatrice, Nebraska, and is a member of the AACT Board of Directors, as well. "I am thrilled to be joining the team at Theatre Lawrence," Ulmer said. "I look forward to getting to know the community and continuing the legacy of impactful, quality programming that the theatre is known for." Ulmer succeeds Mary Doveton, who founded the organization in the late 1970's and has served as its only executive director in the years since.



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Opportunities and Resources

Listings do not imply AACT endorsement

2023 SETC Convention

This signature annual convention, held every year by the Southeastern Theatre Conference since 1950, features more than 5,000 attendees, 300+ workshops, an Education Expo with 90+ schools represented, 40+ commercial exhibitors, a Theatre Job Fair geared towards off-stage work, and more.

The SETC Convention also hosts the AACT Region IVa festival, including Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, as well as the AACT Region IVb festival, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

March 1-5, 2023—Lexington, Kentucky
convention.setc.org

USITT Conference and Stage Expo

The United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) is a membership organization that aims to advance the skills and knowledge of theatre, entertainment and performing arts professionals in the areas of design, production, and technology, and to generally promote their interests.

The USITT conference, held annually, focuses on workshops that help educate attendees on several aspects of theatre. There is also a stage expo in which companies showcase their products to the individuals attending the conference.

March 15 - 18, 2023—St Louis, Missouri
usitt.org

National Arts Action Summit 2023

The National Arts Action Summit is a multi-day event that provides grassroots advocates with crucial advocacy training from experts in the field and empowers them to put that training into practice in meetings with elected officials. Hosted by Americans for the Arts in collaboration with dozens of national, state, and local organizational partners (including AACT), the Summit is the largest gathering of its kind, bringing together a broad cross section of America's cultural and civic organizations.

March, 2023
aact.org/summit

Artie's Advocacy Tip

Election season is now over! How did your candidate do? If they were elected, now is a great time to send them a congratulations and/or thank-you note outlining what your expectations are and the kind of support you would like to see from them in the upcoming years. If they were not elected, a thank-you note is still a great way of thanking them for their service and support in the past.

Building some sort of ongoing relationship with your elected official is important in your advocacy and fundraising goals, even if you both do not agree on the issues. Continue to make your voice heard and bring awareness to your arts community and mission.

Finally, consider attending the Arts Advocacy Day Summit scheduled for March 2023. Held in Washington D.C. each year, this event is a great way to network, dive deeper into the issues impacting the arts, and advocate with national and state-wide arts agencies to strengthen pro-arts policies. To learn more visit **americansforthearts.org**

Web Power

If your company produces new plays and you want to get the word out to playwrights, a resource at your fingertips is our website's "Play Contests & Other Opportunities" page.

Whether you're sponsoring a contest or are simply looking for new works to produce, post your announcement at aact.org/contests. (You'll also be able to view calls for new plays from other theatres and organizations.)

Your postings get results, too—"Play Contests & Other Opportunities" consistently ranks among the top five most-viewed pages on the AACT website.

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

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CONCORD THEATRICALS FOR MORE INFO, VISIT:
concordtheatricals.com/p/65514/popcorn-falls

AACT Corporate Partners

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

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"A farce with an edge!" – Kansas City Star

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A Romantic Comedy About Romance Novels (2w-2m) Published by Playscripts

"Downs flexes his considerable wit" – Denver Post

How To Survive Your Family At Christmas

A New Holiday Comedy (2w-3m+Carolers)

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BeaconAgency@hotmail.com
212-736-6630

Calendar of Events

Dates	Event	State	City	Phone	Email	Web Site
Jan 5	AACT Script Club: <i>Clue: On Stage</i>	Virtual		817-732-3177	info@aact.org	aact.org/club
Jan 12-15	Mississippi State Festival	MS	Tupelo	662-231-9958	robertgeno@comcast.net	mississippitheatre.org
Jan 20-23	Wisconsin State Festival	WI	Beaver Dan	920-763-3130	frustratedthespiancarla@yahoo.com	bdact.org/2023-wisconsin-aactfest/
Feb 2-3	Idaho State Festival	ID	Boise	208-488-4718	bradooley1@hotmail.com	facebook.com IdahoAssociationOfCommunityTheatre/
Feb 9-12	Washington State Festival	WA	Tacoma	253-272-2281	kaleidoscope@ tacomalittletheatre.com	tacomalittletheatre.com/kaleidoscope
Feb 10-12	Maryland State Festival	MD	La Plata		grossdj.144@gmail.com	mctfa.org/cms/
Feb 22-26	Texas State Festival	TX	Victoria	817-731-2238	preston@texas theatres.org	texas theatres.org/texfest-2023/
Feb 24-26	AACT Winter Board Meetings	CA	San Diego	817-732-3177	info@aact.org	aact.org/calendar

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