



Twelve Urban Legends Of AACTFest Rules

By Murray Chase, Festival Commission Representative and Technical Chair of the Festival Committee

You've heard them spoken of with reverence, with contempt, with certainty, and with confusion. The AACTFest guidelines—written, edited, and re-edited—have been designed to create a level playing field for all theatre companies involved. However, the *AACTFest Handbook's* very evolution, almost all of it for the better, has become a major source of festival confusion. Do you know the rules? Probably only if you spend an hour to read the new Handbook once every two years; that's how often it changes.

Also, whether through attention-deficit or just imagination, "assumed rules"—the results of tradition or gossip—have often been stated as fact by companies, host theatres, or even AACTFest representatives.

This article is meant to dispel some of the common myths related to festival participation. You may have heard about some that you'd like to share. I'm sure that the *Spotlight* editors would love to hear about them, so that we can get the true guidelines recognized as a common standard. In each case here, the corrective source is the current *AACTFest Handbook 2013 Cycle*.

Legend 1: AACTFest Reps Can't Give You Time Updates During Set-up, Performance, or Strike. That's just not so; there is no restriction on getting official updates from a timer positioned backstage. The Handbook simply states that in the event of a violation of the timing rules, "no announcement will be made."

Legend 2: Top Production Honors Are Awarded as an Aggregate of Points. Top productions are selected through a ranking by the adjudicators, with no discussion unless there is a not a majority vote for each of the top three shows in a festival. This system is discussed at

length in the Handbook, with a ballot form in the addendum.

Legend 3: The On-Deck Space Must Be 10'x 10'.

Actually, the rules require that the space be 100 sq. ft, with configuration determined by each host theatre based on its available space. It always pays to check with the host theatre in advance.

Legend 4: You Must Completely Empty the On-deck Space Prior to the Show and Leave It Empty During the Show.

There's no such requirement or any reason for it. Items may be left in the space or taken out during the show. Also, items may be pre-struck to the space during the performance. That's just good planning.

Legend 5: All Production Elements, Including the Actors, Must Be Positioned Inside the On-deck Space Before the Set-up and After the Strike.

The Handbook states

that all company members must begin in the on-deck space, or "immediately adjacent to it." In other words, everyone can stand around it, leaving the space available for materials. Incidentally, rehearsal times do

not have the same restrictions. The company members can be anywhere in the theatre at the beginning of a rehearsal; they just can't be doing anything that would be construed as rehearsing in the performance space.

Legend 6: No One Can Talk Or Make Noise During Set-up.

Again, that's just not so. Everyone may communicate about their tasks, run fundamental light checks, sound checks, microphone checks, etc. Just remember that no one can use this set-up as a mood-setter, or use the

call for scripts

AACT is looking for scripts for the major new festival AACTNewPlayFest. Submissions must arrive by November 1!

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continued on page 11

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Linda M. Lee
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Tragedy struck about 9 pm on the 4th of July, 2012. A passerby noticed smoke rising from the building at 1100 W. Randol Mill Road in Arlington, Texas, the home for the past 29 years of the Creative Arts Theatre & School (CATS). The fire quickly advanced to three alarms and blew out through the upstairs prop room, where it started, to consume the entire stage and backstage area and cover the auditorium with black, noxious smoke. Firefighters, working through the night, had to punch holes in the roof above the prop room to gain access. Water used to extinguish the flames flooded the 1st floor (or basement) below the auditorium. In the end, the devastation was complete, the building condemned.

Can you produce excellent theatre without being in the community?

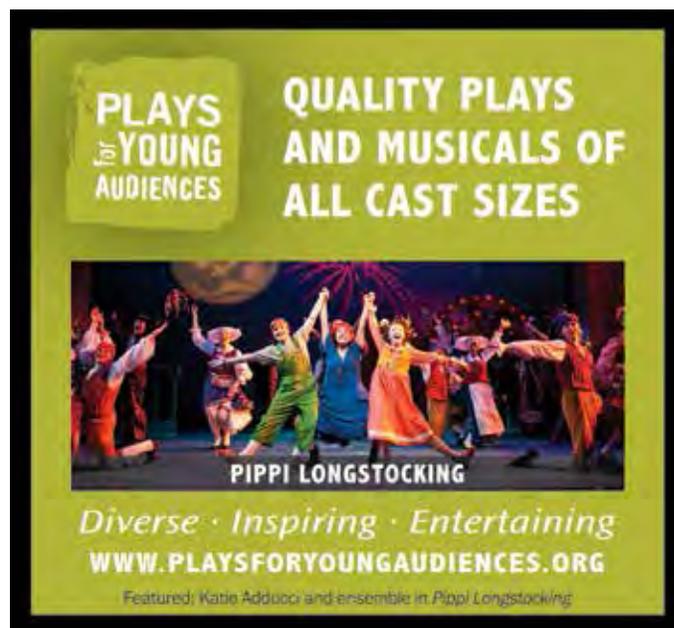
That is when the community of theatres sprang into action. Theatre Arlington immediately offered space and technical assistance for the CATS SummerStars program which was to start on Saturday. They also held a fundraiser, then matched those funds from their own resources. Runway Theatre in Grapevine, Texas, added a benefit performance of their current show, *Guys and Dolls*, proceeds going to CATS. Music Theatre of Denton, Texas, sent a check. And the Live Theatre League of Tarrant County, a collective of theatres, approved a \$1,000 donation. Almost as important as the money, so needed and deeply appreciated, was the knowledge that the theatre community cared.

The nonprofit theatre community is comprised of every size and type of theatre, from the large professional theatre to the smallest all-volunteer amateur theatre, senior theatre to youth theatre. Though the differences in budget and operating styles may differ greatly, the basics are clearly similar – to provide excellent productions. Surrounding those productions are education programs, outreach efforts, social service opportunities, cultural tourism, and community involvement.

A theatre community can be as small as one or two theatres in a single town, or as large as the International Amateur Theatre

Association (IATA), which spans the globe. By participating in various service organizations such as the Live Theatre League (local), the Ohio Community Theatre Association (state), the American Association of Community Theatre (nation) and IATA, theatres place themselves in the community of theatres. They network, they share, they support. Can you produce excellent theatre without being in the community? Maybe. But I guarantee there are things to be learned and joyous times to be had by extending your reach and becoming a part of that community on a larger scale.

CATS epitomizes the saying *the show must go on*. CATS is not a building. It is a program with a 33 year history and a host of current and former students who have been nurtured by caring, professional teachers and directors. They will survive – in part because of the theatre community to which they belong.



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AACT is creating a major new works festival and the deadline for script submissions is November 1



Final Act Ensemble, Des Moines Community Playhouse's Senior Radio Theatre group, performs at the Iowa State Fair.

See page 18 for John Viars's feature on DMCP's programs for building social capital.

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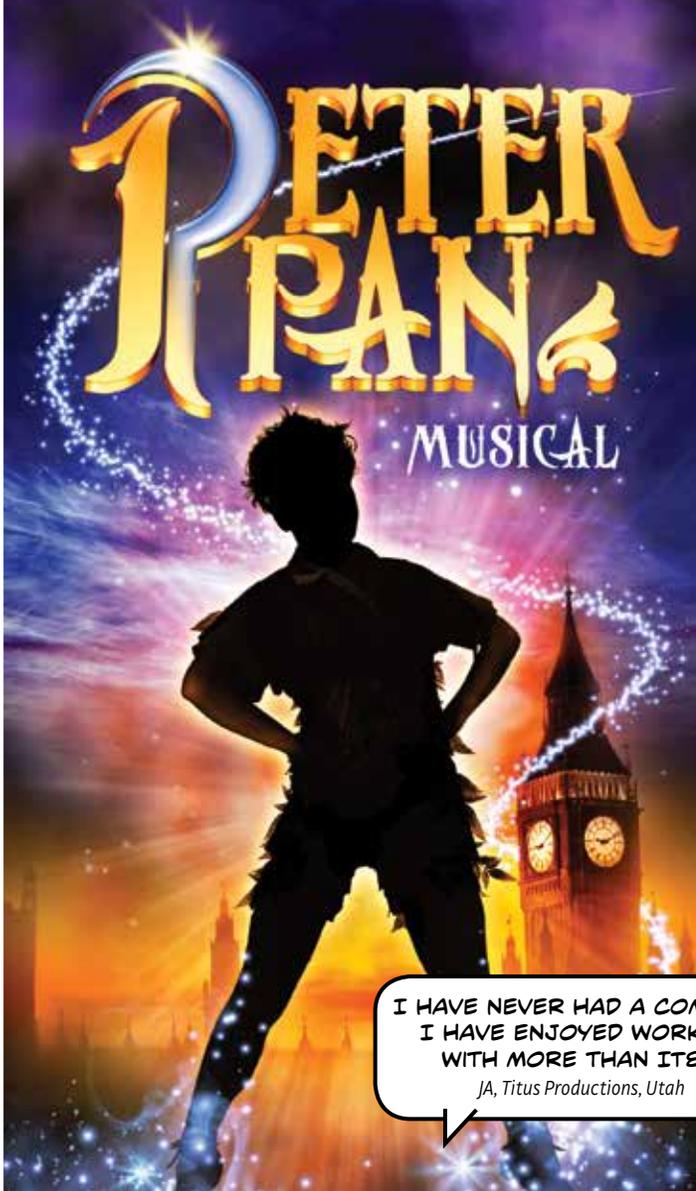
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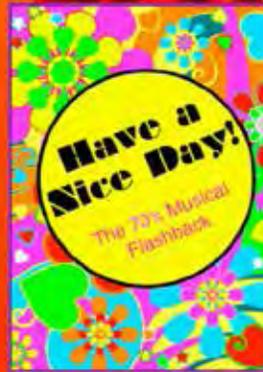
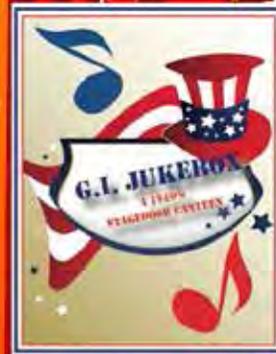
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Upcoming AACT Meetings**Executive Committee Meeting**

October 12-14, 2012
Carmel, IN
Hosted by Carmel Repertory Theatre

AACT Winter Board and Committee Meetings

February 7-9, 2013
Arlington, TX
Hosted by Theatre Arlington

Meetings are open. Contact the AACT office for details.

Upcoming Educational Conference**Artistic Directors Conference**

November 11-13, 2012
Hosted by Theatre Arlington (TX)

Thanks to Daniel Austin for his assistance during the AACT NYC Convention and Stephen Bird for taking photos during the convention.

Did you know?

you can add your photo to your profile on the AACT website or add your theatre's logo to the theatre's profile? Sign in, go to your profile, hover over the generic person or building graphic, then click on the up arrow that appears in the top, left of the graphic.

www.aact2.org

New Board Member

Joline Powell (Germany) was appointed in July to a Member at Large position, replacing Susan Harrington who was elected, but unable to serve. Joline is in Region X, US Military Overseas.

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.

Editor: Julie Crawford
Design: Jim Covault

AACT welcomes *Spotlight* input and requests for advertising rates. Contact Darlene DeLorenzo at darlene@aact.org or at the phone numbers below.

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Commercial Insurance vs. Theatre Insurance: *Is There a Difference?*

by Ken Roberts



All too often, when a theatre representative is filling out one of our applications for insurance, they will either call or email us with the question, “Why do you need to know that?” That question is almost always followed by, “No one has ever asked us that before.” The real question theatres should be asking themselves in these situations is, if their current or former insurance representative truly knows theatres, why haven’t they asked the right questions before? The answer is painfully simple; there is often a tremendous difference between standard business insurance, or *commercial insurance*,

A typical insurance agent may not be able to truly appreciate how theatres make their magic.

and *theatre insurance*. That difference can be costly if a theatre’s insurance representative and insurance company aren’t completely familiar with the unusual exposures associated with community theatre.

As discussed in previous articles, theatres choose their insurance agents and brokers for a variety of reasons. They might be board members, brothers-in-law, patrons or even donors, but the most common reason given for selecting a certain representative is because they’re local. While being local is very convenient if it’s important to have an agent or broker within arm’s reach at all times, in today’s age of email, toll-free phone numbers and the

internet, no insurance representative is ever very far away. Being local is not nearly as important as being responsive and knowledgeable.

A typical insurance agent may not be able to truly appreciate how theatres make their magic. There are many important factors that must be considered when it comes to a theatre’s insurance coverage. Here are some examples: Touring companies might need extra limits in their “Damage to Rented Premises” coverage, as well as coverage for their theatrical properties that goes everywhere with them, including coverage during the time that those properties are being transported from place to place, called “transit” coverage. Since most theatres utilize nothing but volunteers to build their sets and costumes, as well as perform their shows, workers compensation may not be applicable when a volunteer is injured, which brings about the need for accident insurance. Business Income coverage might be needed to insure precious ticket and membership revenue while a theatre is closed for covered repairs. Coverage for board members’ personal assets must certainly be considered in the form of Directors & Officers Liability, especially since those volunteers are working so hard to help theatres raise the necessary capital to fulfill a theatre’s mission. The list goes on and on.

In any case, commercial insurance policies can be fairly standard, and as we all know, there is nothing standard about community theatre, so nothing should be considered standard about a community theatre’s insurance policy. There is a difference. ♦

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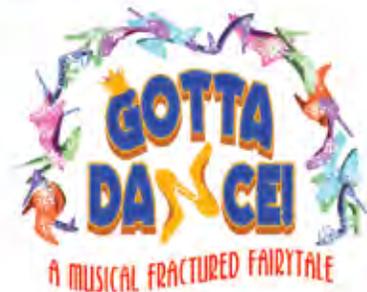
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Carmel: the Apple of AACTFest

by Larry Creviston, National Festival Chair, AACTFest 2013

AACT has selected Carmel (pronounced KAR məl) Indiana for the national AACTFest 2013 and the site of the first co-produced festival, in 2015. This unprecedented commitment in Carmel comes from the unique advantages offered. Carmel, immediately north and adjacent to Indianapolis, is Indiana's seventh largest city. But why Carmel, you may ask? With so many successful AACT Festivals in the past in some equally exciting cities, why has AACT decided to concentrate here?



Center for the Performing Arts, Carmel, IN

Indiana is known as the “Crossroads of America” for a reason. With so many major interstates pointing the way to Indiana, close proximity to major cities Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dayton, Louisville and more, plus easy flights in and out of Indianapolis, travelers should have

an easy time getting to the Festival. As an added bonus, the Indianapolis airport is one of the newest in the nation.

Carmel is a unique city. It has recently undergone a major revitalization. Within the past ten years the downtown area has developed into a real treasure. New shops, restaurants, and cultural sites have been built. The city is abuzz with people enjoying the newly developed nightlife. There are new statues throughout the downtown area; several J. Seward Johnson Jr. statues are present making Carmel one of the largest outdoor museums in the world. Also, according to the Guinness book of World Records, Carmel has the smallest Children's Art Museum. Despite all of this new infrastructure, Carmel still maintains its small town feeling. People will feel safe throughout the festival experience.



J. Seward Johnson, Jr.'s sculpture Big Sister, in downtown Carmel.

Carmel's city leaders decided to make Carmel one of the premier performing arts cities in the Midwest. The Carmel Center for the Performing Arts was built on the grounds of a former cornfield located near the heart of the city (it was mentioned that Carmel was a small city). The Center consists of four performance areas. The amphitheater located in the green area is surrounded by some amazing

venues. The Studio Theatre, a 200-seat black box, is an actor's dream.

The intimacy gives the audience a feeling of really being a part of the show. The Booth Tarkington Theatre is the “Broadway” house of the complex. With as many flies and trap doors as possible, it gives a “sky is the limit” feeling to a production. The crown jewel of the complex is The Palladium, a 1600-seat concert hall that is considered one of the top ten acoustically perfect buildings in the world. World-renowned five-time Grammy nominated performer Michael Feinstein is the Artistic Director of the Palladium. He has located his Great American Songbook collection—including some of the greatest memorabilia from Gershwin, Porter, Kerns and many more—at the Palladium. This collection is on display and will be available to be seen by Festival participants. Incidentally, as part of the festivities, we are planning an event for this venue that will “knock your socks off!”



AACTFest 2013
Carmel, IN
June 17-23, 2013
www.aactfest.org

We hope to make AACTFest 2013 an event you will not want to miss. Community Theatre is our National Theatre and AACT is the voice of Community Theatre. We here in Carmel think this festival will make strides toward the goal of letting people know just how valuable community theatres are.

See you in Carmel in June of 2013! ♦

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set-up for artistic intent. If so, the set-up time becomes part of the performance time.

Legend 7: No One May Enter or Leave During a Performance. It's illegal to detain an audience member who wants to leave a performance for any reason. That audience member, however, is not allowed to re-enter during the performance. That's legal.

Legend 8: If the Show is Classical (Shakespeare, Moliere, Chekhov), It's Public Domain and No License is Needed. That's not always the case; you may be using a copyrighted translation or specific edition of the play. It's best not to assume. The same applies to music used during the show; a specific recording of a classical piece may be copyrighted.

Legend 9: Once The On-Deck Space Is Loaded from the Street, Nothing May Be Added or Removed Prior to Set-up. Again, there's no rule prohibiting this, and many reasons against such a rule. Perhaps there's a weapon being used during the show that needs to be secured except during the performance time, or an expensive musical instrument that stays with the musician. Perhaps something broke on the trip to the festival and needs to

be replaced. Once the space is shown to hold everything (costumes including), items may be moved. It's good practice to load props or musical instruments back into the space just prior to the show.

Legend 10: The Rehearsal Time Begins When the Show's Set is In Place and Spiked. Most people do know that the rehearsal time—80 minutes through the AACTFest rules—begins with all items in the on-deck space and finishes the same way.

Legend 11: No One Can Talk To The Adjudicators. Of course you can...just not about the festival's shows. The adjudicators are not allowed to discuss the festival's productions prior to balloting, apart from the post-show adjudications.

Legend 12: The Show Must Be Performed in a 10'x10' Space. Honestly, this assumption actually occurred.

In all cases, it's best to read the Handbook carefully—each cycle. It may not be the most entertaining book you've read this week, but it can clear up a lot of misunderstanding...ahead of time.

Have a great festival year. ♦

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AACT Years of Service

In celebration of volunteer service to AACT, the Board created the Years of Service recognition. Years of Service pins are presented to volunteers who have served AACT as Board members, on committees, and as State Contacts for 5, 10, 15, 20 or 25 years.

The first Years of Service pins were presented last year as part of AACT's 25th anniversary celebration. Eight volunteers received pins for 25 years of service!

AACT congratulates and appreciates these 22 volunteers for earning Years of Service pins.



photo by Stephen Bird

(left to right) Scott Bloom, Bevie Lord, Carole Ries, Linda Lee, Patricia White, Frank Peot received their AACT Years Of Service pins during the NYC Convention.

25 years

Frank Peot Sun Prairie, WI

20 years

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Patricia White Amherst, NH

15 years

Linda Lee Fort Worth, TX
Jim Sohre Germany

10 years

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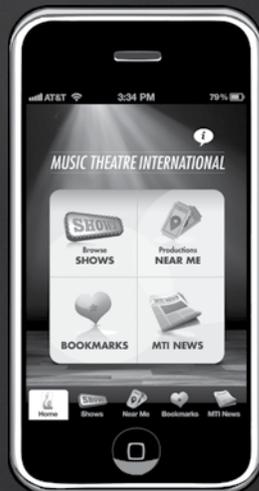
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AACT in the City: NYC Convention Returns to New York

By Ron Ziegler

AACT members and guests had the opportunity to sample the New York theatre scene in July at the 2012 NYC AACT Convention. Starting from a base in the heart of the Theatre District at the Millennium Broadway Hotel, attendees were just steps from the best of Broadway theatre, as well as the myriad of opportunities offered in The Big Apple.



photo by Ron Ziegler

Times Square at night

AACT's Board of Directors arrived early for the event for meetings beginning Wednesday, July 11. Meetings continued on Thursday.

The convention began in earnest late Thursday afternoon with a reception and celebration, honoring playwright Ken Ludwig. The event highlighted AACT's joint program with Samuel French, Inc., Act Locally, AACT Nationally: Celebrating Ken Ludwig, which offers discounts on Ludwig plays during the next two seasons. The event allowed participants to meet and chat with Ken "up close and personal," to hear his background and views on playwriting, and to ask questions about his life, work and theories. At the end of the session, AACT President Linda Lee presented Ken with a specially commissioned work of glass art as a token of AACT's appreciation for his life work.



photo by Stephen Bird

Playwright Ken Ludwig answers a question during the reception held in his honor.

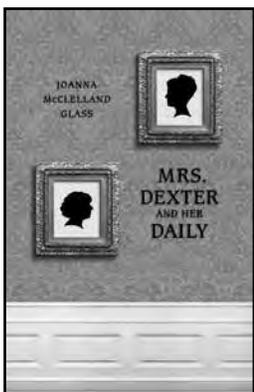
After the reception, participants were off to the theatre for *The Book of Mormon* or other selected productions.

Day two of the convention marked the opening of fifteen vendor exhibits in the Millennium's Gallery 8 reception area. The exhibits offered theatre representatives and others the opportunity to see the latest in technology and

discover latest script offerings and other theatre-related fare.

No AACT New York conference would be complete without workshops and tours and the 2012 conference was no exception. Beginning Thursday afternoon with a tour of the TDF Costume Collection and a Subway Tour led by Rick Kerby, the workshop/tour activities continued Friday morning, and concluded with Saturday morning sessions, held for the most part in the conference center of the hotel. Popular workshops such as Theatres and the Law and the Actor Panel were supplemented by workshops by Music Theatre International's John Prignano, a Rights and Royalties panel, a tour of costume designer Arnold Levine's workshop, a casting workshop by Jeff Whiting, a workshop in Patron Technology/Social Media, a workshop for musical directors, a late addition of a cultural planning and development workshop presented by Webb Management Services, and the ever popular Showstopper! Workshop presented through the generosity of Manhattan Tour and Travel. The workshops were capped by the presentation

continued on the next page



MRS. DEXTER AND HER DAILY by Joanna McClelland Glass

For the past ten years Edith Dexter has employed Peggy Randall as her housekeeper, but the time has come for them to part ways: Mrs. Dexter is moving after a difficult divorce. Before they can say goodbye, the women must prepare the house for potential buyers. As they go about their domestic tasks, both reflect on the hardships they have faced, and on their fears of growing old alone. Though very different in class and culture, their lives have become closer than either expected, struggling with failed marriages, loneliness, and the physical and mental threats of aging.



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of an excerpt of a new play from Dramatists Play Service, *Motherhood Out Loud*.

Friday evening was “show time” again, with many of the participants attending *War Horse* at Lincoln Center’s Vivian Beaumont theatre. The production was followed by a talkback session, featuring many of the shows actors, puppeteers, and stage managers.

After Saturday workshops, many attendees availed themselves of Saturday matinees at the various theatres—or took the time to sightsee or just catch their collective breaths. Late afternoon brought the conference’s closing event and awards ceremony in the beautiful historic Hudson Theatre in the hotel complex.

Following an early dinner at the Hudson, attendees witnessed a brief awards ceremony where emcee and festival chair Dennis Gilmore guided the events. After the presentation of AACT’s annual awards, the gathered assembly was treated to musical entertainment by Broadway performers Kerry Prep and Stephanie Kababe, with piano by Broadway composer (and Manhattan Tour and Travel Vice President) Ed Linderman, who entertained with a medley of overtures from his musicals *A Girl Singer*, *Fragrant Harbor*, and *The Zimmer Girls*. Following the program, it was off to the theatre again for another opportunity to view a final show.

So, another New York convention is history! AACT is grateful for the financial support of Manhattan Tour and Travel, Music Theatre International, Samuel French, Inc. and Tams Witmark Music Library, Inc. for their conference support, Dramatists Play Service for their Awards sponsorship and Bastrop Opera House for hospitality support. ♦

See page 16 for more NYC photos

Falling for the waitress who serves your patty melt...



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photo by Stephen Bird

Broadway artist Kerry Prep performs at the AACT Awards Dinner at the Hudson Theatre in New York. Kerry is accompanied by Ed Linderman.



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NYC 2012 Photos



photos by Stephen Bird



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more NYC Convention photos on page 21

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Building Social Capital in Your Community

By John Viars
Executive Director, Des Moines Community Playhouse

In May, the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines presented its “Better Together Award” to the Des Moines Community Playhouse. The award recognizes nonprofits that are building social capital in the community.

The broad definition of social capital, as stated by the Des Moines community foundation is “connections among diverse people or groups, based on trust, that enhance cooperation for mutual benefit.”

Communities with an abundance of social capital are more likely to benefit from lower crime, better health, higher educational achievement, and better economic growth. They are also more civil.



Volunteers work on the set for The Sound of Music at Des Moines Community Playhouse.

In accepting the award, I said, “I appreciate that The Playhouse is being recognized for something as important as building social capital. We know that the definition of social capital pretty much describes what theatre does as a fact of its existence. We know that community theatre does an even better job of it, and we know that the Des Moines Community Playhouse is 100% committed to doing it best.”

Commercial theatre creates community and capital by bringing a group of professional actors together with a group of professional stagehands, all guided by professional directors, producers, choreographers, and other personnel. True, they are diverse, and true, they must collaborate with other groups and establish trust to accomplish their goals, but they have a commonality that limits the diversity. It’s their job. They’ve trained for it and they come to the party with a common set of experiences.

Community theatres, on the other hand, create their social capital by seeking members from a group that is almost

completely diverse. Walk through your theatre on opening night. You will see the house staff - all volunteers, comprised of retirees, students, and families who usher, house manage, take tickets, greet the patrons and promote the theatre out of an abundance of passion. They are a diverse group, coming together to work on a common goal, and they interact and connect within the group and with other groups – the audience, the backstage crew, the actors, the staff members.

Go backstage. You’ll see the performers and stage crew - in our case, a group comprised of retirees, college students, a private pilot, recovering addicts, farmers, business owners, white, black, Latino, gay, straight, transgender, rich, poor, young, old, healthy, challenged – all interacting within their group for a common purpose. They connect with other groups, like the house staff, in order to create the best show possible. This describes, for me, the excitement that is exclusively community theatre, and the best damn creator of social capital that I am aware of.

The Des Moines Community Playhouse is taking the building of social capital several steps further. At every level – creative staff, administrative staff, volunteers, and teachers - we commit to enhancing social capital by creating common operating principles that apply across all groups, and take steps to bring groups together who would not typically interact within an organization.

Our lingua franca for operating principles is a concept we call U3. It was developed by The Playhouse’s Education Director Kathy Pingel to use when working with young people in our Ed Department and in

children’s theatre productions. When I directed *To Kill a Mockingbird* this past winter, I asked Kathy to help me institute the program for the kids in the show, and quickly realized it worked with the adults as well.

It wasn’t long until the staff embraced it and it is now the lens

through which we view almost all activities. It’s a deceptively simple list of three rules: Uphold the environment. Uphold the company. Uphold the story. These rules, or operating principles cover all activities that we perform.



Rent in rehearsal at Des Moines Community Playhouse, June 2012

Upholding the environment means keeping the building and the spaces within it in good shape, so they can best serve the creation of our product. It means that everyone involved needs to know how the theatre and its resources are best used. In its broadest definition, it means anything from recycling to being aware that actors are concentrating onstage during tech – so don't discuss the lighting cue so loudly that it breaks their concentration. It means maintaining the space so that it is clean, safe, and ready to be used for its intended purpose.

own production, attended by their teachers, parents and even the judges who had placed them in the group home. They fully integrated with the Playhouse family. The behavioral changes were amazing to family, counselors, and teachers alike. The social capital benefits for these young people and The Playhouse people who worked with them were life-changing.

That's what community theatre can do. ♦

John Viars is a past president of AACT.

Resources

For more information about the programs mentioned in the article (and others like them)

Kpingel@dmplayhouse.com

Jviars@dmplayhouse.com

Books:

Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community by Robert D. Putnam

Better Together: Restoring the American Community by Robert D. Putnam



Des Moines Community Playhouse cast members on a Spotlight school visit, part of the Spotlight: Literacy program.

Upholding the company means that it is up to each individual to make sure that everyone involved has a positive experience. It's the "I've got your back" principle. It includes respect for the process (being quiet when others are rehearsing), getting lines down in a timely fashion, being patient with another's struggle. It's the part where we get a chance to be helpful, patient, supportive and tolerant.

Upholding the story is the simplest of all the principles. The story must go forward and all must be equally committed to it. When a child or adult makes a bad choice, misses an entrance, goofs off, or engages in non-productive behavior, instead of telling him or her to knock it off, we ask how what just happened upholds the story and help redirect the behavior into more positive areas.

Finally, in an organization as large as ours, we have many social capital groups, and we like to mix them up, bringing together disparate groups. Our Senior Radio Theatre group interacts with junior high school audiences. Our Spotlight Literacy program creates an interactive letter writing relationship between all performers in children's theatre productions and an elementary or middle school classroom.

One of our best recent successes in this realm is with kids from Children and Families of Iowa, troubled teens adjudicated into group homes for various reasons. We started them out with set building, and mixed our volunteers with a group of kids who, when they first arrived, had one supervisor for every 4 or 5 kids, and weren't allowed to go to the bathroom without supervision. By the end of our first session, the young people had written and performed their

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Saturday Morning Post

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The Tribune

"Reaper" is available from:
Playwrights Guild of Canada
www.playwrightsguild.ca

AACT Adopts New Strategic Plan

The AACT Board took bold action in July to move the organization forward with the adoption of a challenging Strategic Plan for 2012-15 and a budget to support it.

A primary goal in that new plan is to increase AACT organizational membership by 50% within three years.

“Currently AACT has about 1200 organizational members, representing approximately 18% of the known community theatres in the country,” reports AACT President Linda M. Lee. “Those theatres benefit from a myriad of programs, resources and discounts provided by AACT. In turn, they enhance AACT by sharing the wealth of their experience and expertise through networking via AACTList, AACTivity, AACTFest, conferences, the Resource Roster, etc. Thus every new theatre member enriches the whole.”

In order to meet this lofty goal, the Board approved a staff increase of one full-time equivalent to focus on marketing/promotion and membership recruitment. The position will provide additional support for AACT volunteers involved in outreach and boost AACT’s visibility.

“We are asking our current member theatres to help with this initiative,” says AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford. “Talk up your AACT membership on Facebook (and make sure you have “liked” the AACT Facebook page!), proudly display the AACT logo on your website and in your programs, and make a point of telling other theatres in your area why you are an AACT member and why they should join as well.”

The Plan’s three other goals were also created to support reaching out to theatres across the country. They call for more effectively communicating AACT’s identity, providing services to strengthen community theatre, and developing AACT through more diverse leadership.

Though a challenging plan, the rewards of achieving it will be great as AACT realizes the improvement of communities – one theatre at a time. Make sure the communities you love are among them! ♦

AACT Strategic Plan 2012-15

Goal A: More effectively reach community theatres by increasing membership.

Goal B: More effectively communicate AACT’s identity and value to external and internal publics.

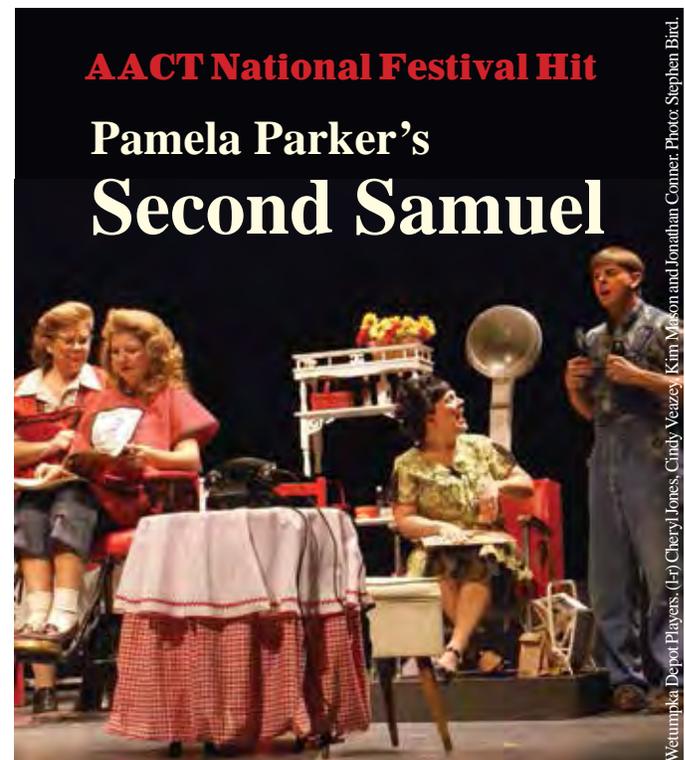
Goal C: Maintain and broaden services to strengthen community theatre.

Goal D: Strengthen AACT through diverse leadership and appropriate organizational structure.

The mission of the American Association of Community Theatre is to foster and encourage the development of, and commitment to, the highest standards by community theatres, including standards of excellence for production, management, governance, community relations and service.

In other Board action

The AACT Board approved free individual membership for US military active duty personnel and those designated as Wounded Warriors.



Wetumpka Depot Players. (L-R) Cheryl Jones, Cindy Veazey, Kim Mason and Jonathan Conner. Photo: Stephen Bird.

“Second Samuel has ‘HIT’ written all over it.”

—Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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A Southern Comedy. Cast: 7m., 4w. It was a simpler time in the late 1940s, especially in South Georgia and specifically in a sleepy little town called Second Samuel. The Great Depression was fading into memory, the war had been won, the election was over, and the folks in Second Samuel were ready for things to get back to normal. Except—this was the summer Miss Gertrude passed away, and deep dark secrets were revealed. Nobody could have imagined how the death of one sweet little old lady would turn the entire town upside down, leaving everybody in Second Samuel wondering if anything would ever be normal again! *Area staging.*

Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes. Code: SIF.

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Beginning a New State Association

by Carolyn McCloskey, AACT State Contact for Oregon

For nine years committed community theatres in Oregon have been working on a plan for building a network of theatres in Oregon. Our mantra “If Washington State can do it, why can’t we?” has kept us going. What a journey it has been and continues to be.

Where did we start? With an idea.

I retired to McMinnville, Oregon in 2001 and brought the idea with me, having no clue what I was getting myself into.

I taught with the Department of Defense Overseas Schools in Germany for 22 years and was involved with the Army community theater, Five Pfennig Playhouse, in Hanau, Germany. Each year theatres from military facilities all over Europe gathered in Heidelberg for a One Act Festival and I loved it. I learned a great deal from the adjudications, and enjoyed watching plays by other theatres, and participating in our own entries. I also gained a network of theatre friends I still have.

McMinnville is a great town for a festival. Gallery Theater meets all the requirements and is in the historic downtown in the heart of the Oregon Wine Country with its many good restaurants and shops. Kathie Maldonado, past AACT VP Festivals, became my guru and ultimately good friend through the years. (We have some great stories to share from our festivals, believe me.)

I made a proposal to the Gallery Theater Board, which graciously agreed to let me proceed with something with

which they were totally unfamiliar. Since that initial proposal to pursue a state theatre network, I have learned:

- Once begun, it takes real long-term commitment to make it work.
- It takes at least one committed person leading the way with the ability to convince others that this is a great and workable undertaking.
- Theatres come and go. Some go under; others lose the enthusiastic, go-to person needed. Personnel changes occur all the time, so a core group of committed theatres is essential to continue the vision.
- Never give up. There were times when I was ready to call it quits, but each time those involved said, “Let’s keep on.”
- Building interest from theatres is like fishing...some nibble, some never bite, others grab the bait and are hooked.



Carolyn McCloskey

Finally, in order to support our festivals and off year conferences, it was decided that we needed to have a state association. In 2010 we became the Oregon Community Theatre Alliance (OCTA). We used the Washington State Community Theatre Association’s articles of incorporation and bylaws as models and are in the final stages of getting our nonprofit status with the IRS. We have 13 member theatres from around the state and have as a goal to have 20 members by the year 2014. We are re-energized after a very successful conference in 2012 and our hope is to hold an Oregon AACT One Act Festival in 2013.

So we move forward, wiser than we began, but still committed to the values of networking, sharing resources, and enhancing the quality of community theatres in Oregon. Yes, and “fishing”! ♦

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AACT Seeks New Plays

AACT is creating one of the largest new works festivals in the country: AACTNewPlayFest. Scripts will be accepted until November 1 for this new playwriting contest. The winning plays will be announced in June 2013. Then five or six community theatres around the country will produce the top plays of the contest. For submission guidelines go to www.aact2.org/?page=NewPlayFest.

The script is the heart of any theatrical production and it is the script that records and brings to life our culture for future generations. There is no shortage of new works, but few will survive if not discovered, produced, and published. Community theatres know the value of developing new plays; some even conduct new play contests. But many theatres have little time to find that new, quality script, and often don't have the tools to sell an unknown play to their patrons.

This was the challenge presented to AACT by a member playwright several years ago. A task force was appointed to address the issue and in February the AACT Board adopted its recommendation for a new play program. Thanks to Texas Nonprofit Theatres (TNT) for leading the way! This program is modeled on TNT's POPS! – Producing Original Plays program.

AACTNewPlayFest takes place over a two year period. But unlike AACTFest, productions don't have to travel. Selected theatres will produce the winning scripts in their local communities. AACT will provide tools for local promotion and spread the buzz nation-wide!

Scripts must be full-length, non-musical plays, written in English, that have never received a fully-realized

production. Submissions will only be accepted electronically through the AACT website. AACT is in discussions with several publishers to publish an anthology of the winning plays. The playwright will be paid a royalty by the producing theatre and an expense paid trip to the theatre for a rehearsal or performance.

Producing theatres were selected in August (too late to be announced here). They will listed on the AACT website in mid-September. They were selected from AACT member theatres that applied in June and July.

Readers are also needed. AACT is seeking people with the time, interest, and theatre expertise to read and score the scripts. Each script will be adjudicated by at least three readers. Those that rise to the top will be read by a second set of Readers. Their scores will determine the finalists. Apply to be a reader online at www.aact2.org/?page=NewPlayFest by October 1.

The winning plays will be selected from the finalists by the producing theatres, adding the test of producibility to the process. The winning plays will receive fully realized productions between June 2013 and December 2014. National visibility for the plays will help playwrights find second productions for their works.

AACT is leading the way in developing new plays for the American theatre community. AACTNewPlayFest will be an exciting journey! Throw your script, or your reader's hat, into the ring now! ♦

New Titles for Community Theatres from Heuer Publishing

Deadpan

by Kevin Kelleher

Headsets (A View from the Light Booth)

by William Missouri Downs

No Body Like Jimmy

by Burton Bumgarner

Thee and Thou

by Bret Jones

With Friends Like These

by Robert Lynn

Free eScripts for AACT Members at heuerpub.com



Photos: Deadpan by Kevin Kelleher
Willow Ridge Restaurant (IA)

photo by Ron Ziegler



Oregon State Contact Carolyn McCloskey moderates a "Let's Talk About It" session at the Oregon Community Theatre Alliance Conference. The gathering was held June 23 in Forest Grove, OR.



photo by Ron Ziegler

Stage combat workshop participants, including Oregon State Contact Carolyn McCloskey (right), listen to presenter Ted deChatlet give instruction during the Oregon Community Theatre Alliance Conference, June 23, 2012 at Theatre in the Grove in Forest Grove, OR.

photo by Ron Ziegler



AACT Festival Committee Member Dave Sheppard does a quick repair on a device used in his theatre's production at the Eastern Massachusetts Association Festival, held in Chelmsford, MA June 28-30, 2012.

photo by Ron Ziegler



Festival Commission Representative Lori Chase (right) goes over timing procedures with stage manager (and Eastern Massachusetts Community Theatre Association President) Rachel Fennell between shows at the EMACT festival, June 28-30, 2012 in Chelmsford, MA.

AACT Festival Commission Representative Wanda Schenk addresses the audience at the Oklahoma Community Theatre Festival, held in Tonkawa, OK July 12-15, 2012.



photo by Darryl Cox

photo by Darryl Cox



AACT Electronic Communications Committee Vice Chair (and Oklahoma Community Theatre Festival Chair) Chris Williams (left) makes a point to the assembled company from Gaslight Teens, Enid, OK during their production meeting. AACT Festival Commission Representative Wanda Schenk stands far right on the auditorium floor. The festival was held July 12-15, 2012 in Tonkawa, OK.

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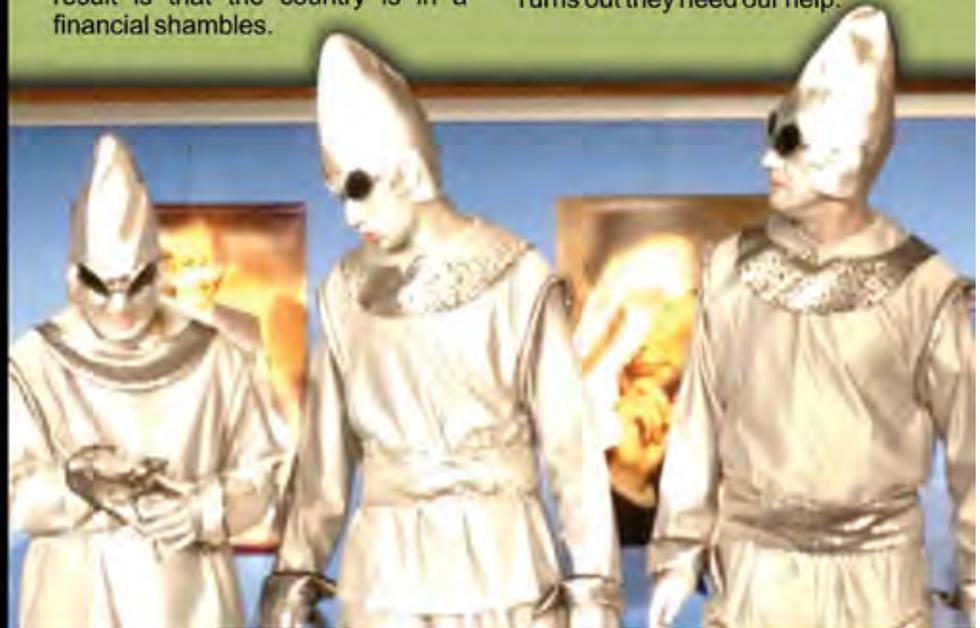
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What's the best tip or idea you got from networking with people from other theatres or how has networking helped you or your theatre?

From AACTList

I think the AACT conferences.... Managing Director's, Education Directors, Artistic Directors and every other workshop format has been key for folks to connect and learn. AACTList is a close second for those not able to get to these events. The networking is fantastic, but I'm reminded of one director who commented that just one idea from the conference in Madison covered the cost of the conference.

– Jill Patchin, Grand Rapids, MI
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre
www.grct.org

I have used networking to get feedback on plays we are considering doing. It has been valuable.

– Paul Mattes, Hudson, FL
Heritage Pines Drama Club

At a Florida Association of Community Theatres "Spring Fling" meeting, we were having a roundtable discussion about building customer loyalty. Someone shared the



idea of leaving a thank-you note with chocolates in an envelope taped to the chairs of season subscribers when they attend the last show of the season, to encourage them to renew. We are currently in our third year of doing this, and my subscribers love it—it makes them feel special. I use Ghiradelli squares, since they're the flattest for putting in envelopes!

– Eric Hurst, Tallahassee, FL
President and Artistic Director
Theatre A La Carte
www.theatrealacarte.org

On Facebook

I learned how to convert a prom dress into a period costume from a contact I made at AACTFest (their entry had wonderful period costumes...)

- Lynn Harper Nelson, Tupelo, MS
Tupelo Community Theatre
www.tct.ms

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Details: www.americanbluestheater.com/season-news/new-work-development/blue-ink-playwriting-award/submission-rules/

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AACTivity Tidbits

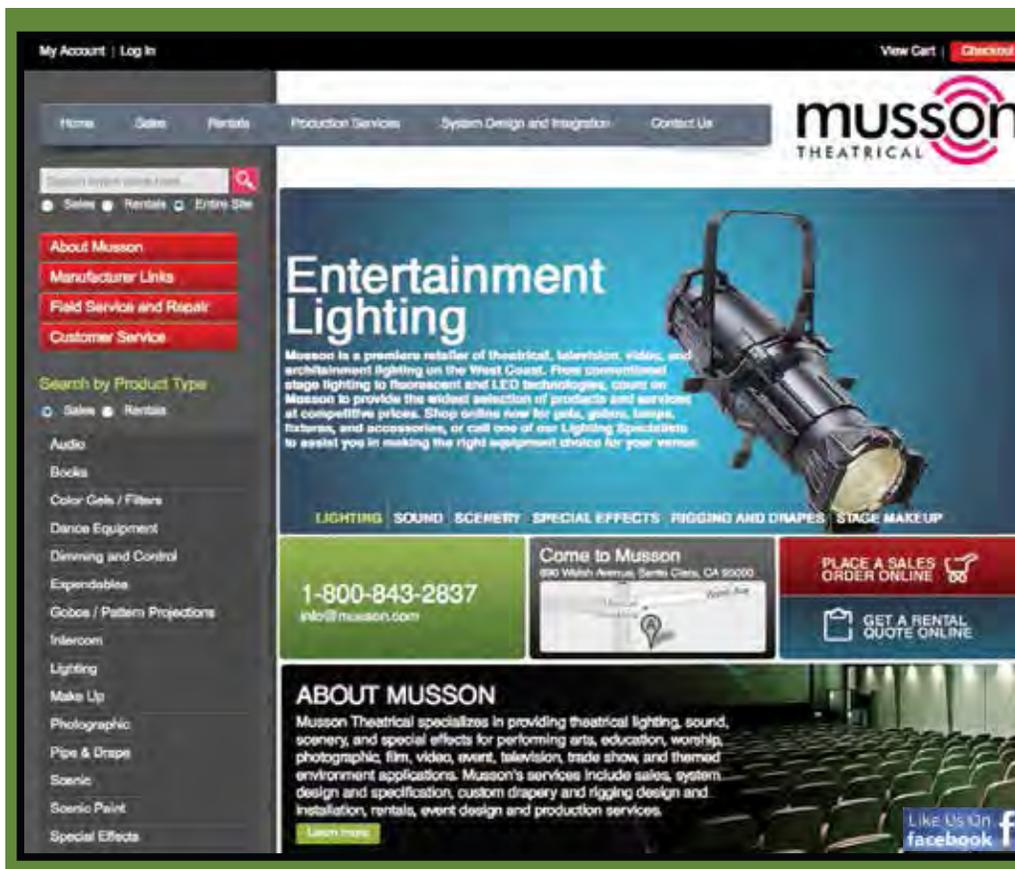
Have you discovered AACTivity on the AACT website?

It has profiles of AACT member theatres with information about

- **Board** - Number of members, length of term, member profiles, term limits, etc.
- **Box Office** - Ticket prices, number of subscribers, attendance, ticketing & software.
- **Chief Administrator** - Responsibilities, salary, benefits, etc.
- **Community** - Population of city & service area, other theatres in area, etc.
- **Documents** - Bylaws, job descriptions, mission statements, or other documents
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- **Playwrights** - Listings of plays by AACT-member playwrights
- **Productions** - Plays produced by year, publisher or play source, plus a success rating
- **Profiles** - A list of all current AACTivity members, with key information from various AACTivity categories
- **Season Selection** - Who selects theatre season and how, number of productions and performances per season
- **Volunteers** - Number of volunteers, training, volunteer coordinator, recognition

Is your theatre included? Is the data up to date?

To browse the profiles or submit your theatre's information, go to www.aact2.org, "Programs/Resources," "AACTivity?"



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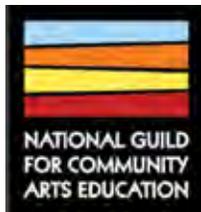
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Details: www.communityartsed.nationalguild.org/Home.aspx

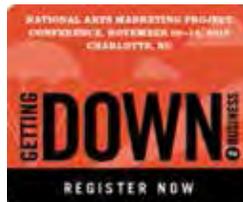
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New Roles

The Board of Directors for the **Center Theatre**, Dover-Foxcroft, ME is pleased to announce the hiring of a new Executive Director, **Angela Bonacasa**. Angela comes to the Center Theatre after serving as the Business Operations Manager and, previously as Secretary, of the national Society of American Fight Directors. She has taught theatrical combat in universities and private institutions across the country, including Carolina School of the Arts, where she also served as Coordinator for the National Stage Combat Workshop. She began her duties in June.

Jacque Campbell has been hired as the new Education Director at **Theatre Arlington**, Arlington, TX. After a 10-year stint as both a performer and teacher at **Casa Mañana** in Fort Worth, Jacque moved to Houston where she taught acting and was a musical theatre workshop instructor at the **Applause Theatre**. She also worked for a time as a teacher at Theatre Arlington for its classes and outreach program. She began work in her new position last spring.

Scott Mohon has reassumed his role as Executive Director of **Theatre Victoria**, Victoria TX. This is his third



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time in the position. Scott was executive director at the theatre for four years before leaving in March 2010 for a job with Rhode Island's **Newport Performing Arts Center**. He returned in February 2011, but left in June of that same year for a position in Queens, New York. Scott has a long history with Victoria dating to childhood; he attended elementary and high school there. He later attended the University of Texas at Austin and the University of California, Irvine. He began his current tenure in May, 2012.

After a national search, the Board of Directors of **Grandstreet Theatre**, Helena, MT is pleased to announce that **Kal Poole** has accepted the position of managing director, taking the reigns from **Tom Cordingly**, who has retired after more than 18 years in the role. A native of Helena, Kal attended Grandstreet Theatre School as a child. He holds a Masters of Fine Arts degree from Ohio State University and comes to Grandstreet from **Whistling in the Dark Theatre Company** in Columbus, OH, where he served as Managing Director. He began his new duties in August. ♦

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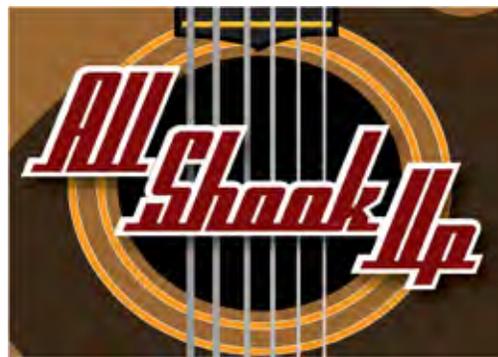
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Spotlight Award Goes to Colleen McGonegle

The **AACT Spotlight Award** partners AACT with theatres to recognize individuals and organizations for long or special service that has had a significant impact on the quality of their local theatres. Any AACT member theatre may apply to present the Spotlight Award.

Colleen McGonegle has provided exceptional service to the command-wide **Army Europe Entertainment Community Theatre and Music** participation program from July 2009 to present.

The Installation Management Command Europe Region Entertainment presented the AACT Spotlight Award to Colleen on April 21, 2012. Mike Duda, the Director of Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation for US Army Garrison - Schweinfurt, presented the award. The presentation was made at the annual Tournament of Plays "Topper" awards in Heidelberg, Germany.

Colleen is currently serving as the manager of Theatrix Command Costume Support Center. She assumed the position at a very difficult time in the Army's budget history, implementing mandated cuts without any



Colleen McGonegle receives the Sptlight Award from Mike Duda, Director of Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation for US Army Garrison - Schweinfurt.

loss to the collection of costumes. This resulted in higher customer satisfaction, more user-friendly selection procedures, and most important, continuously better cost-effective support to the soldiers, family members, and civilians, who volunteer their time to produce and perform in shows that entertain their local communities.

Colleen has provided great leadership by safeguarding, maintaining and replenishing the tens of thousands of costumes, accessories and period furniture. She displays a positive commitment, dedication, and expertise that

has resulted in the highest level of community theatre support for our soldiers and families overseas.

Colleen's nominator wrote, "Colleen's professionalism, managerial style, and dedication have greatly enriched the experience of participating in the live Entertainment program." ♦

Moving On

Theatres recently selected to represent their states in AACTFest 2013

Some states qualify to send two shows to the regional festival.

Reg	State	Theatre	From	Production
I	ME	Cauldron and Labrys	Portland	<i>The Greatest Actress Who Ever Lived</i>
I	MA	Burlington Players	Burlington	<i>Radium Girls</i>
I	MA	Harvard Community Theatre	Harvard	<i>Crossing Brooklyn</i>
VI	OK	Duncan Little Theatre	Duncan	<i>The Dixie Swim Club</i>
VI	OK	Heller Theatre	Tulsa	<i>Shooting Star</i>
VII	CO	Aspen Stage	Aspen	<i>Unmarried in America</i>
VII	CO	Stage Left Theatre Company	Salida	<i>I Am My Own Wife</i>



A Cautionary Tale

by Twink Lynch

The e-mail message read: “What does a board do when a member has been recruited in error, to the detriment of the organization?”

This is a fairly young, passionate theatre group, all volunteer, which does three productions a year. Their total annual budget is under \$20,000. Their board of eleven members consists primarily of production-related people. There are no job descriptions for board members and their recruiting process has been somewhat ad hoc - the board member in question was recruited before they had developed an official nominating committee.

The problematic board member initially seemed like a good choice. He had been part of a theatre group in another town and seemed knowledgeable about theatre in general and play literature in particular. He also had been generous to other causes and had experience serving on other boards. He was retired and had time to give to the organization. He looked like a great addition to the board.

Unfortunately, all expectations for his service were not explained to him, nor were his goals in serving explored. This group prides itself on being a great extended family “where everyone feels that his or her contribution is unique and valued,” and he has not participated the way they’d hoped. Instead, he gossips and complains about the group to others in the community. He constantly criticizes theatre volunteers when they don’t do things the way he thinks they should be done. Most of the beleaguered board members want him off the board, but, to their chagrin, he drew the long straw when they recently wrote term limits into their bylaws and has three additional years to serve.

This group has the option of letting his term run out or dealing with the problem now. I vote for now, before he does more damage. It is never easy to confront a problem like this, but letting it fester will damage the group’s effectiveness and morale over time.

I think they need to find out what’s really going on here. What does this man want from his association with the theatre group? Does he want power? His behavior makes me suspect as much. If so, what kind of power does he want? Social power (for the benefit of others)? Personal power (for the benefit solely of himself)? (See Chapter 23

of my book.)* What would he do with it if he got it? If he could run the theatre, what would he do differently than they are doing now? What is his vision of what this theatre should look and be like and is it in any way compatible with the dream of the original group?

I think they need to have a quiet face-to-face meeting in a neutral place with time enough for exploration and discussion of the issues at stake here. I think “James Doe” should be told that the theatre group has a problem and

I believe it’s better to have an empty chair than the wrong person in that chair.

needs his help, trying to enlist his investment in a win-win outcome. I’d try to tell him exactly the behaviors that the people in the group find troubling, trying not to characterize the behaviors as “combative” or “scolding” or “condescending,” but rather specifically describing words and body language he used in a particular situation. Perhaps “James” doesn’t realize the impact his behavior has been having on his co-volunteers. Perhaps he’s angry at something else and it’s spilling over into his interactions at the theatre. Perhaps he believes this theatre is being run ineptly and it’s his prerogative to make them do things “right” (otherwise known as “his way”).

I would use Mike Murray’s “Turning Gripes into Goals” exercise (*Spotlight*, March-April 2011). It might look like this (the group would just list one choice in each area):

My problem/gripe/frustration is we have a toxic board member who is a detriment to the organization.

“My real concern is...

- 1) he will take over
- 2) he will drive away good board members, volunteers and patrons
- 3) he will make life miserable for all of us for the next 3 years

continued on the next page

- 4) he will cause a rift in the organization
- 5) all of the above

“What I’m really wishing for is that...

- 1) he would go away (resign, be terminated); OR
- 2) he would tell us what’s wrong; be honest about his needs & wants so we could make peace so the theatre would benefit from all our work

“My goal is...

- 1) for him to resign or for the board to terminate him; OR
- 2) for us to understand him better and for us to work together (and maybe for him to change, but that’s not in the group’s control)

“Therefore, my problem is to...

- 1) design the steps for termination/resignation; OR
- 2) provide training, feedback, counseling, opportunities for appropriate participation in the group’s activities”

Keep in mind the board members need to do this exercise, and, since I don’t know all the complexities and/or intensity of the issues, what they come up with may be different from what I have suggested above. The important thing is that they do the exercise, which is designed to take some of the emotionality out of the problem-solving process.

Sometimes a theatre group cannot meet the needs of certain individuals who have chosen to participate. Maybe “James” really needs to take his energy and expertise elsewhere. If bad things escalate and separation is needed, it helps if there is a provision in the bylaws outlining the circumstances under which a board member may be terminated. In some really ugly situations, the board may need legal advice. The board should try to determine the “worst thing that can happen” if they ask “James” to resign. (Will he complain to the media about an unfair board? Will he take others with him? Could he have a negative impact on ticket sales? Might he sue?) The

board should try to de-fantasize their worst fears and see if the group wouldn’t survive even the “worst thing.”

This is a cautionary tale. Beware recruiting board members without due diligence. It is every bit as critical as casting a play, maybe more so. We all know a show can’t be successful if only some of the actors are right for their roles. Well, neither can a board be successful if only some of their members are well chosen.

Some groups tell me they are grateful just to find someone who’s breathing. I believe it’s better to have an empty chair than the wrong person in that chair. If just one inept actor (who never learns lines, upstages other actors, misses entrances, and bottom line can’t act) can ruin a production – so can one toxic board member destroy the effective functioning of a board, and that can have very negative consequences for the long-term health of the organization.

The key is in the recruiting. Analyze your current board – what skills do they have, how much longer will they serve, what are the current or upcoming gaps for skills needed by the group? Identify people who can fill those gaps, interview them face to face, share needs and goals and dreams, and try to determine if they would work well in a group where every person’s ideas and opinions are respected. Unfortunately, sometimes people have hidden agendas and don’t tell the truth, so there are no guarantees. But at least the odds are improved that your theatre will have the board it needs and won’t be driven to distraction by a malcontent.

Reprinted from *Spotlight*, October 2004

**Twink Lynch wrote a regular column on boardsmanship for Spotlight for many years. Her early articles are compiled into a still-relevant book for boards: Boards in the Spotlight. See ad on page 34 for ordering information.*



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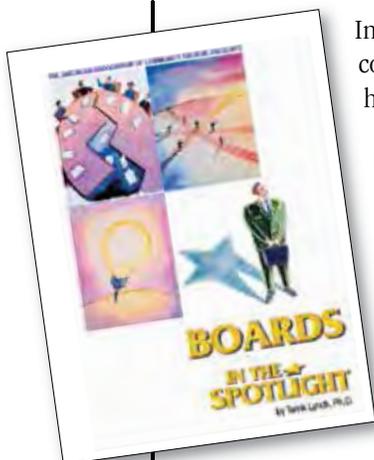
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When	Who/What	Where	Information
August 31 - September 3	Ohio Community Theatre Association 2012 OCTA State Conference	OH Worthington	419-569-1458 www.ohiocommunitytheatre.org
Sept 21-23	New Hampshire Community Theatre Assn ★ State AACTFest 2013	NH Milford	781-377-4233 www.nhcommunitytheatre.com/
Sept 28-30	Community Theatre Association of Michigan Annual Fall Conference	MI Cadillac	989-463-1252 www.communitytheatre.org
Oct 5-6	Virginia Theatre Association ★ 2013 State Festival and Conference	VA Culpepper	540-568-6038 www.vtasite.org
Oct 10-14	Georgia Theatre Conference ★ 2013 State AACTFest	GA Americus	256-673-1326 www.georgiatheatreconference.com
Oct 13	West Virginia Theatre Conference ★ 2013 Community Theatre Festival	WV Glenville	304-462-6323 www.wvtheatre.org
Oct 24-27	Florida Theare Conference ★ Florida Community Theatre Festival	FL Gainesville	863-665-9606 www.flatheatre.org
Oct 25-28	New England Theatre Conference 61st NETC Annual Convention	MA Natick	617-794-2096 www.netconline.org
Oct 25-28	Tennessee Theatre Association ★ 2013 State AACTFest	TN Maryville	865-660-1177 www.TN-Theatre.com
Oct 26-28	The Alabama Conference of Theatre ★ Alabama State Festival	AL Wetumpka	205.936.9162 www.alabamaconferenceoftheatre.com

* Indicates festival in the 2013 Cycle

For dates farther ahead, check the website: www.aact2.org

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