

spotlight

January/February 2015 \$2.50

american association of community theatre

AACTFest 2015

The National Community Theatre Festival
June 23 – 28 Grand Rapids, MI

Auditioning

Directors share tips

Season Tickets

are making a comeback

Theatre Management Conference

June 22-24, Grand Rapids, MI

Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, home of AACTFest 2015

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Gary Walker
AACT President
2013-2015

Art and Business. Two words we don't often see side by side but nonetheless the place I find myself today.

I'm from the world of traditional business – specifically, a manufacturing company. For me, community theatre was a place to bring my business acumen, doing fundraising and board work. I enjoyed theatre as an audience member so it seemed like a good fit.

As I approached becoming president of my local theatre board, I decided I should work as a crew member on a show to get some understanding of what I was so adamantly

Selecting the shows should place me squarely in the Art column, and in many ways it does.

representing to my peers in the business community. Jan, my wife, then bought me a walk on part in *Kiss Me Kate* and that planted the seed that led to my being cast in a number of shows. Now Jan, who is a painter and a legitimate artist, insists I call myself an artist as well.

So it is that I juggle the business side of life with the more creative. Recently, I've been working with others to advise my local theatre on its next season. Selecting the shows should place me squarely in the Art column, and in many ways it does. Obviously, the quality and content of the various plays and musicals under consideration are the starting point for discussion.

But we must also consider: Will it sell? Will it put the proverbial "butts in seats"? Does it have enough appeal to add needed dollars to the operating budget of the theatre?

And it doesn't stop there. Will the volunteers who crew and perform the show love doing so? Does the show offer diversity – age, gender, cultural, ethnic? How does it

balance against other shows in the season? Let's face it, no one wants to see a season of five shows with three legal-themed productions!

So here I find myself, as many of you do every year, engaged in Art, but pouring over spreadsheets of data, emails from our peer theatres telling us how well shows have done in their community, and putting together the jigsaw puzzle of art and business that a season of community theatre seems to be.

I suppose we have to remember that for all the beauty, entertainment, inspiration, and challenges that our chosen Art provides, at the end of the day, **it is a business**. And most of us understand, it's a lot more fun than making widgets!

Gary Walker



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Check out the collection by visiting www.harttheatre.org and clicking on **Rentals > Backdrop Rentals**.






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Elite Commercial Members

Introductions to AACT's Elite Commercial Members and the services they offer

Contacting AACT

AACT
1300 Gendy Street
Fort Worth, TX 76107
817-732-3177 Fax 817-732-3178
(toll free) 866-OurAACT (687-2228)
info@aact.org

AACT welcomes *Spotlight* input and requests for advertising rates. Contact David Cockerell at david@aact.org to submit content. Contact Darlene DeLorenzo at darlene@aact.org for advertising rates and specs. David and Darlene are also available at the phone numbers above.

On the Cover

The 12 winning productions at AACTFest 2015 will perform on the main stage of the newly remodeled Grand Rapids Civic Theatre.
Photo by Laszlo Regos Photography

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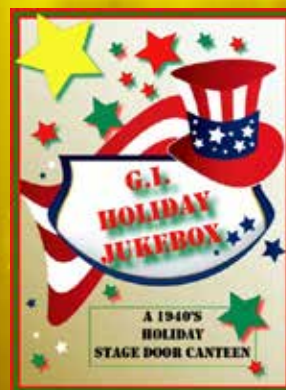
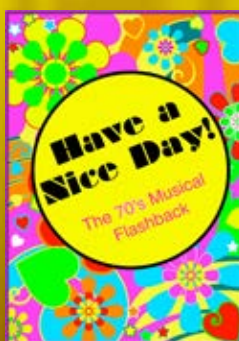
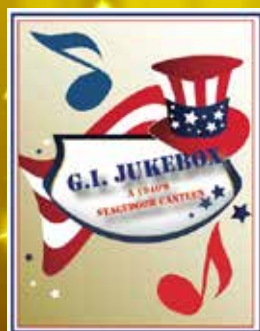
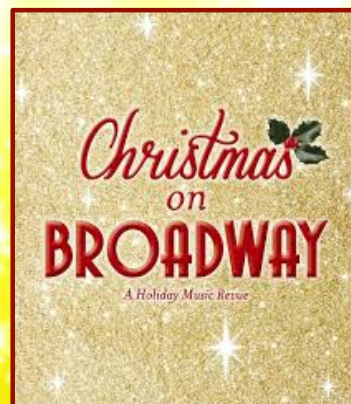


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Dani Martin, Membership Specialist
Jill Patchin, Conference Coordinator

Upcoming AACT Meetings

AACT Winter Meetings 2015 for AACT Board & Committees

February 18-21, 2015

Charlotte, NC

Hosted by Metrolina Theatre Association

Meetings are open. Contact the AACT office for details.

Upcoming Events

World Theatre Day, Friday, March 27, 2015. World Theatre Day was created by the International Theatre Institute in 1961 to celebrate theatre around the world, and world-wide theatre events are now organized in honor of the day. www.iti-worldwide.org

Arts Advocacy Day, March 23-24, 2015. Hosted by Americans for the Arts and cosponsored by 85+ national arts organizations, the 28th Annual Arts Advocacy Day will be the largest gathering of its kind. Advocates from America's cultural and civic organizations will meet in Washington, DC with members of Congress in support of issues like arts education policy, the charitable tax deduction, and funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. AACT is a cosponsor of this event. www.americansforthearts.org/events/arts-advocacy-day

Thanks

- to Des Moines Community Playhouse, for short term use of office space
- to Grand Rapids Civic Theatre and Jill Patchin, for hosting the fall AACT Executive Committee meeting
- to the many volunteers who assisted with the AACT Membership Renewal Campaign

Corrections

to the November/December 2014 *Spotlight*:

In "AACT NewPlayFest Produces Six World Premieres Across the Country," the location of California Stage Company was incorrectly listed. California Stage Company is located in Sacramento, CA.

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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Content and resource contributions:

Marsha Amato-Greenspan, Susan Austin, Stephen Bird, Murray Chase, David Cockerell, Jim Covault, Julie Crawford, Darlene DeLorenzo, Brian Feldman, Nancy Jones Foote, Richard Gannon, Sue Ellen Gerrells, Dan Goggin, Tim Jebesen, Rick Kerby, Michael Kimball, Steve Koehler, Beverly Lord, Twink Lynch, Karen Matheny, Kristy Meanor, Wm P Muchow, Lynn Harper Nelson, Jill Patchin, Stephen Peithman, Helen Peppe Photography, Kathy Pingel, Laszlo Regos Photography, Jenna Ritsema, Ken Roberts, Ray Tartar, Lou Ursone, Gary Walker, Ron Ziegler

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American Association of Community Theatre

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AACT Insurance Program

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



For more information, contact:
800-749-5646
325-658-4519 Fax
kenneth.roberts@usi.biz

How do we know when it's time?

Mark Our Calendars



by Ken Roberts

The wide wonderful world of commercial insurance changes nearly as often as our theatres change sets during the course of an average season. Insurance companies are always tinkering with their products, as well as the rules for selling their products, in order to remain profitable and therefore viable, much the same way we will alter our approach to marketing our theatres to keep our patrons excited about attending season after season. For instance, before the tragic events of September 11th, 2001, there

customers. For this reason, most companies are extremely cautious about extending coverage proposals for more than 30 days, which is why most quote proposals expire after 30 days, after which we have to reapply. They want to be prepared to change their coverage at a moment's notice, so that we have all the coverage we need in any situation, and that *they* are collecting enough premium to pay virtually any claim situation that arises.

That brings us to the question of *how far in advance should we apply for insurance?* We usually contact our agents for quotes when we're entering our budget process, and that's fine, but we must remember that if our current policies don't expire for several months, we won't get a quote for several months, and if our policy expires within a week, chances are good that our agents won't be able to get us a quote before our current insurance expires. A good rule of thumb for most companies is to submit applications 45 to 60 days prior to the expiration of the policy. This gives the underwriters time to properly evaluate the theatre and issue a quote that won't expire before the current coverage runs out. It also allows time for you and your agents to gather any requested information that the insurance company might need in order to properly consider your theatre for coverage, *including making sure you get credit if you don't have any claims.* if you're fortunate enough that the coverage dates on your insurance policy coincide with your fiscal year, it's all that much better, but if not, mark your calendar to make sure you tackle insurance during its preferred window of opportunity. ♦

A good rule of thumb for most companies is to submit applications 45 to 60 days prior to the expiration of the policy.

was no apparent need for terrorism insurance here in the U.S., and before that, mold claims in several states caused insurance companies to exclude or limit mold coverage as soon as they possibly could.

The point is, insurance companies never really know where the next serious claims issue is going to come from, and they want to be able to package and price their policies to make the most sense to both them and us, their

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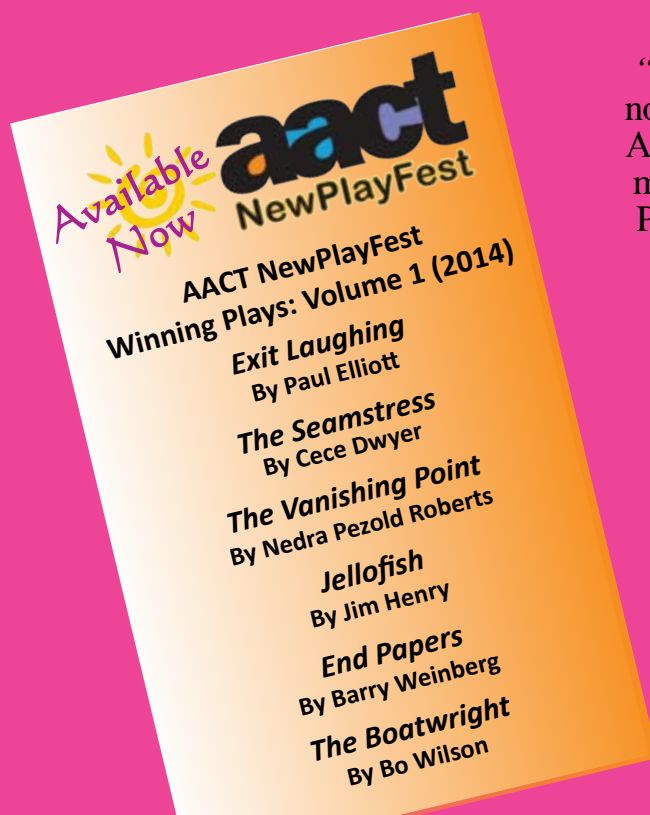
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USI Southwest
 Ken Roberts, Program Manager
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New from Dramatic Publishing

AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)

Exit Laughing is now available as a standalone acting edition.



The Springfield Little Theatre production of “*Exit Laughing* broke all house records for any nonmusical in the 50-year history of this theatre. After the first preview, we sold out every performance (480 seats) at full price for its entire run. People were coming back two and three times, bringing family and friends, to see the show. Amazing!” *Beth Domann, Executive Director of The Historic Landers Theatre.*



Exit Laughing

Comedy

By Paul Elliott

When the biggest highlight in your life for the past 30 years has been your weekly bridge night out with the “girls,” what do you do when one of your foursome inconveniently dies? If you’re Connie, Leona and Millie, three southern ladies from Birmingham, you “borrow” the ashes from the funeral home for one last card game, and the wildest, most exciting night of your lives involves a police raid, a stripper and a whole new way of looking at all the fun you can have when you’re truly living. *One int. set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Cast: 1m., 4w., Code: E86.*



Springfield Little Theatre, Springfield, Mo., featuring (l-r) Judy Luxton, Nanette Crighton and Sandy Skoglund-Young. Photo: Gerry Averett.



Available from: www.DramaticPublishing.com 800-448-7469

PLAN TO ATTEND!

Plan now to attend AACTFest 2015 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Twelve winning productions will be presented, as well as networking, educational experiences, and workshop opportunities at the National Community Theatre Festival known as AACTFest.

"With the state festivals taking place, we are excited about the level of artistic quality and variety that promises a great AACTFest in Grand Rapids. Community theatres across the country are doing great things and anyone attending in June will see the best of the best. Grand Rapids hospitality is warm, generous, and genuine. A good time will definitely be the theme of each day," said Kay Armstrong, AACT Vice President of Festivals.

The Grand Rapids Civic Theatre will be the location for the productions, and our host hotel is the Amway Grand Plaza, an AAA Four Diamond luxury hotel. A five-minute walk between the hotel and theatre takes you past a myriad of restaurants and shops. The city also boasts the Gerald Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Children's Museum, Public Museum, and Urban Institute of Contemporary Arts—all within steps of the host hotel. For more, visit www.experiencegr.com.

AACTFest 2015 promises to be a blockbuster event. Registration and more information are available at aact.org/15.

AACTFest 2015 hotel

The official hotel for AACTFest 2015 is the luxurious Amway Grand Plaza located in downtown Grand Rapids, a short walk from the Theatre. Enjoy our special AACTFest rate of \$129 for 1-4 in a room. Reserve online at resweb.passkey.com/go/AACT2015 or call (800) 253-3590 to reserve at the AACTFest rate.



Thursday, June 25

- * Vendor Exhibits
- * Workshops
- * Silent Auction & Design Competition/Exhibit
- * AACT Awards and Membership Meeting
- * Performance Session III (Regs 2 & 3)
- * Evening on your own

Friday, June 26

- * Vendor Exhibits
- * Workshops
- * Silent Auction & Design Competition/Exhibit
- * Performance Session IV (Regs 7 & 1)
- * Performance Session V (Regs 10 & 4a)
- * After Show Networking

Saturday, June 27

- * Vendor Exhibits
- * Workshops
- * AACT Board Meeting
- * Silent Auction & Design Competition/Exhibit
- * Performance Session VI (Regs 4b & 8)
- * Pre-Awards Cocktail Party
- * Awards Ceremony
- * Awards Afterglow

Sunday, June 28

- * Adjudication Workshop Wrap-up

AACTFest 2015 National Festival Schedule

(subject to change)

Monday, June 22, 2015

- * Community Theatre Management Conference
- * AACT Meetings

Tuesday, June 23

- * AACT Board Meeting
- * Community Theatre Management Conference
- * AACT Committee Meetings
- * Rehearsals Begin
- * Adjudication Workshop
- * Welcome Reception

Wednesday, June 24

- * AACT Meetings
- * Community Theatre Management Conference
- * Adjudication Workshop
- * Regional Reps/State Contacts Meeting
- * Silent Auction & Design Competition/Exhibit
- * Performance Session I (Region 9 & wild card)
- * Opening Night Dine-arounds or on your own
- * Performance Session II (Regions 6 & 5)

AACTFest 2015 continued on page 12



Grand Rapids Civic Theatre

AACT – the Connection Resource for America's Theatres

By Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director

AACT is the “go-to” place for many in community theatre. For almost 30 years, AACT has held to an unwavering mission, to increase the quality of community theatre from the governance and administration of the local theatre organization to its productions on stage to its service to the community.

AACT represents the interests of approximately 7000 community theatres across the country and on U.S. military bases overseas. These theatres are embraced and supported by thousands of American communities. They reach the largest live theatre audience in America.

AACT has raised the bar and empowers America's theatres to better excite and serve their communities. AACT connects theatres to programs that create excitement and community engagement, increase the skills of their volunteers and staff,

and share their work. AACT connects persons like you with other theatre lovers through formal and informal settings such as conferences and online forums. AACT facilitates networking so those who make theatre happen can learn from each other's successes and challenges. AACT is the connection for a myriad of resources to help you and your theatre make better theatre.

AACT is an advocate for theatre and community based arts. From its beginning AACT has worked to be the National Voice of community theatre and it has gained respect as that voice, as the go-to place for those who want to know about theatre in America's communities.

AACT is the connection resource for those who seek the voice of community theatre, but more importantly for those who bring together their communities through theatre. AACT is the connection resource for America's Theatres. ♦



AACTFest participants at a workshop

photo by Stephen Bird

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United book at www.united.com, code: ZTRS225501

Delta book at www.delta.com, code: NMKFT

Workshops

Surrounding the performances, the festival plays host to a variety of workshops. Led by the popular Adjudication Workshop, a variety of workshop topics are available to give you a thorough understanding of aspects of community theatre allowing you to enrich your own theatre community.

Listed are workshops currently on the roster, watch *Spotlight* and aact.org for additional workshops.

Administration

Toastmasters and theatre...a winning combination

Susan Harrington, Toastmasters International

Learn how the Toastmasters program promotes competent speaking for actors and administrative leadership skills.

Sit down with Stage Rights

John Beach and Samantha Levenshus

Get the inside scoop from Stage Rights. Bring your licensing and publishing questions.

OSHA . . . dammit

Tracy Alexander, Production Manager, Midland Community Theatre, TX
Breaking down OSHA compliance into easy to swallow bite-sized morsels.

Building Your Audience through Digital Marketing

Erin Bemis, Constant Contact Marketing Expert

How to embrace social media - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and Pinterest to build audience attendance.

From Transactions to Relationships: CRM Strategies

Eugene Carr, Patron Technology, CEO and Author

Highlights of CRM, website design for arts marketing, development, and box office. Trends in patron preferences on-line. Specific techniques for better interaction with patrons and staff.

Artistic

When Color Does Matter

Sal Jones, Artistic Director, Lexington Players, MA &

Susan Harrington, VP, Arlington Friends of the Drama, MA

Selecting and casting race specific plays. How to find the actors to fill the roles.

Theatre Changes Lives. Theatre for youth with special needs

Chad-Alan Carr, Gettysburg Community Theatre, PA &

Morrie Enders, Lincoln Community Playhouse, NE

Two Directors share experience with Penquin Project. YES, you CAN do it!

Blocking: Creating a more interesting visual presentation

Jeanne Johnston, Director, Acting Teacher

Maximize dramatic impact through creating blocking movement.

Write a Musical?!

Lucinda Lawrence, Carnegie Hall & Chicago Orchestra Hall,
Composer and Soloist

Have a story that cries "musical theatre" but you're stuck for what is next? Learn how to flip the creative switch for creating musicals.

Shakespeare for Kids

Robert Picklesimer, Stage Director, Creative Dramatics Workshop, IL
How to learn, perform, create interest, and play with Shakespeare for all ages, but predominantly 6 to 20.

Surprise! Shakespeare Got Italy Right!

Wally Hurst, Director, Norris Theatre, Louisburg, NC

Intentional Shakespeare: Understanding The Inside Knowledge of Italy in Shakespeare's Plays

Veterans, Seniors and Oil Workers . . . Oh my!

Kathy Coudle-King, Executive Director, Greater Grand Forks
Community Theatre, ND

Creating Community Theatre About Your Community. Pitfalls, and joys, of creating original works based on interviews with community members, including obtaining grants.

Performance

I Won't Dance. . . Don't Ask Me

Chad-Alan Carr, Executive Artistic Director, Gettysburg Community
Theatre, PA

Simple but visually appealing choreography for the non-dancer with two left feet.

Working on Winning the Audition-The Shurtleff Approach

Pamela Livingstone, Director, Member SAG-AFTRA

Learn to make the strongest choices when preparing for an audition, a role, or to direct a show. Participants will work and explore short scenes.

Playing the Verbs

Jeanne Johnston, Acting Teacher, Director

Great acting happens when you play the verbs. Hands on workshop demonstrates how to choose the strongest verbs and rehearse them. Come prepared to play!

Technical

Places in 5

John Eppert, Stage Manager

Tips, tools, techniques, and words of wisdom from a veteran Stage Manager. The role of the stage manager from pre-audition to strike.

From Rags to Ball Gowns

Nancy Eppert, Consultant, Trainer, Artistic Director

How to design costumes that enhance the overall production and will set a performance apart from the ordinary.

Theatrical Lighting in small space on limited budget

Robert Picklesimer, Designer, Idaho State University

Theatrical lighting in a small space on a limited budget: the practicalities, and the theory, that enable the very best theatre.

Miscellaneous

A Career In Community Theatre

Richard Gannon and panel

Put your theatre skills to work in a fulfilling environment. Discover that stable employment can be found in community theatre.

AACT Adjudication Workshop

The National Festival offers an excellent laboratory for AACT's **Adjudication Workshop**. This intensive workshop will begin on Tuesday evening, June 23 and continue throughout the festival, culminating on Saturday, June 27. There is also an optional session over breakfast on Sunday to share your opinions of the awards presented. Participants will learn the skills of adjudicating and gain practical experience through observing and critiquing the festival shows. Sessions will be Tuesday evening and mornings (when other workshops are meeting), then between the shows (when the audience is hearing from the national adjudicators) the workshop participants will practice adjudicating the shows and receive feedback in the workshop setting.

An **Introduction to Adjudication Workshop** will be offered for directors and others who are not interested in being adjudicators, but want an insight into the adjudication process. It will be on Tuesday, June 23, 6:30-8:30 pm.



Kathy Pingel

Conducting both the Adjudication Workshop and the Intro to Adjudication Workshop is Kathy Pingel from North Port, Florida. Kathy has adjudicated at the state, regional, national, and international levels for the American Association of Community Theatre. She has taught workshops in improvisation, directing, and senior theatre. She also facilitated AACT's Theatre Education Directors Conference in August, 2010.

Kathy was the Director of Education and Youth Programming at the Des Community Playhouse for ten years, having recently retired in November, 2014. She also served as Artistic Director of the Kate Goldman Children's Theatre. She holds a BA in Theatre from Eastern Michigan University where she studied with Virginia Koste and a MA from Northwestern University in Performance Studies where she worked with Frank Galati. She also holds a MAT in Teaching from Northwestern.

The AACT Adjudication Workshop is part of the national festival, but requires an extra fee (\$135) to help cover the costs of the four plus days of intensive instruction. The fee for the Intro to Adjudication is \$25. **Register for either workshop when you register for AACTFest.** For more information contact the AACT office. ♦

Design Exhibit and Competition to Celebrate Designers and Their Work

Show off the designs that enhance your productions and take them to new levels. The AACTFest 2015 National Design Exhibit & Competition will showcase the best of community theatre in this country. It's an opportunity for your theatre and designers to shine!

The AACTFest National Design Exhibit & Competition recognizes how important designers are to the success of theatre productions. AACT member theatres and their designers may enter; designs must be of productions occurring between July 2013 and June 2015.

Design Categories for the exhibit are scenic, costume/makeup/hair, lighting, sound, special effects/technical design, graphics, and website.

Designers submitting entries for more than one theatre must submit a separate registration for each production.

Theatres submitting entries for more than one designer must submit a separate registration for each designer.

Designs will be on display in the Balcony Walk-through of the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre (AACTFest 2015 production venue) Wednesday, June 24 through Saturday, June 27. Festival participants and community residents will have plenty of time to enjoy the designs.

To download detailed guidelines and to register, visit aact.org/15 and follow the link to Design Exhibit information. ♦

AACTFest 2015 continues on page 14



Stephen Bird

AACTFest 2013 participants share a photo op.

"We broke ticket sales records after the reviews came out."*



The Dallas Uptown Players' 2014 regional premiere of The Boy From Oz was described by local media as "a blockbuster", "exquisite", and the "glitziest, giddiest, most exuberant musical of the summer."

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***Jeff Rane Uptown Players**



Share Your Photos!

Share your AACTFest 2015 photos. Please use the hashtag #aactfest15 when posting AACT state/region festival photos to Facebook and Instagram! We love seeing what is happening off-stage as well as on!



The Rose Barn Theatre of Richmond, Kentucky prepares to take the stage for their performance of *One Day In Cleveland* at the Kentucky Theatre Association State AACTFest 2015.

Nonsense Creator Dan Goggin to Attend AACTFest 2015



Dan Goggin

Dan Goggin will be joining us in Grand Rapids this summer. Plan now to attend AACTFest 2015 and meet the man who brought us the ingenuity of 30 years of *Nonsense*.

Dan Goggin (Writer/Director/Producer) began his professional career singing in the Broadway production of *Luther*, starring Albert Finney. While appearing in a comic folk-duo he started writing. This led to scores for the off-Broadway musical, *Hark!*, the Broadway production of *Legend*, and two revues. Goggin received the 1986 Outer Critics' Circle Awards given to *Nonsense* for Best Musical, Best Book, and Best Music. *Nonsense* and *Nonsense 2: The Second Coming*, both starring Rue McClanahan, were recorded for television, as well as *Nonsense 3: The Jamboree* with Vicki Lawrence. *Nonsense A-Men!* opened in New York in June 1998. *Nuncrackers: The Nonsense Christmas Musical*, on PBS starring Rue McClanahan with guest John Ritter, received an Emmy nomination for Best Musical Score. *Meshuggah-Nuns: The Ecumenical Nonsense* premiered in 2002. In 2005 *Nunsensations: The Nonsense Vegas Revue* opened and in 2011 *Sister Robert Anne's Cabaret Class* and *Nunset Boulevard: The Nonsense Hollywood Bowl Show* premiered. Most recently, the original *Nonsense* celebrated its 30th Anniversary at the Saint Louis Muny. www.nonsense.com. ♦

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Moving On

Theatres recently selected to represent their states in AACTFest 2015. Some states qualify to send two shows to the regional festival.

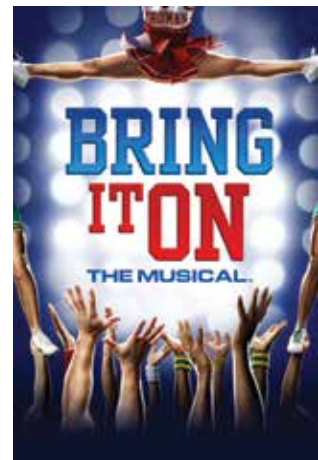
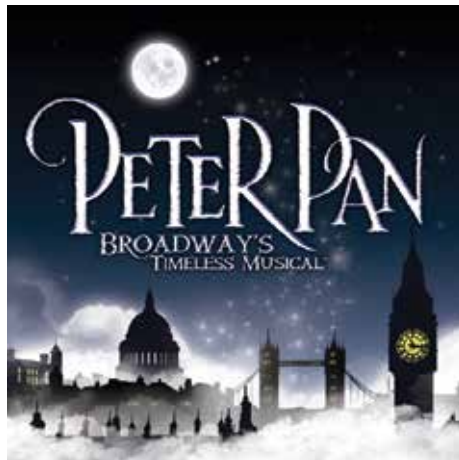
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II	NY	M&M Production Acting Company, Inc.	Amawalk	<i>Paradise Enow</i>
II	NY	Rochester Black Sheep Theatre	Rochester	<i>Feeding the Moonfish</i>
III	IL	Byron Civic Theatre	Byron	<i>Ring of Fire</i>
III	IL	Playhouse on the Square	Jacksonville	<i>Talley's Folly</i>
IV	AL	Wetumpka Depot Players, Inc	Wetumpka	<i>'night, Mother</i>
IV	AL	Leeds Theatre and Arts Center	Leeds	<i>Echoes</i>
IV	FL	Limelight Theatre	St. Augustine	<i>[title of show]</i>
IV	GA	Theatre Albany	Albany	<i>The Lady of Larkspur Lotion</i>
IV	KY	Actors For Children Theatre	Flatwoods	<i>Monsters Under the Bed</i>
IV	KY	The Village Players of Fort Thomas	Fort Thomas	<i>On Weapons and Wounds</i>
IV	SC	Aiken Community Playhouse	Aiken	<i>You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown</i>
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Boldface indicates productions advancing to the National Festival



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AACTFest Myth:

Since I have rights to do the festival show, I'm legal; I can copy and e-mail my scripts.

by Murray Chase, AACT Executive Vice President

Many folks would like this to be true. However, except when you're performing an original script or one from public domain—or you

have express permission to copy—it just isn't true. Most publishers' licenses specifically forbid mechanical or electronic reproduction of their scripts. Why? Because they—and their playwrights—make money on the sale of those scripts, money to which they're legally entitled. It is true that the new AACT rules allow companies to "self-certify" about licensing arrangements, but AACT can't certify a group who obviously is breaking copyright laws. It would be the equivalent of giving safe driver discounts to people as they drove—slowly—through a red light. So...spend the \$28 for four scripts; playwrights will thank you. ♦

AACT NewPlayFest 2016 Cycle – Update

by Susan Austin, NewPlayFest Coordinator

The AACT NewPlayFest 2016 has shown increased involvement in comparison to the 2014 cycle with 269 scripts submitted and 68 volunteers to review those scripts! 25 current members submitted scripts, and 18 playwrights joined AACT and submitted their scripts for free.

Reviewers will send in first tier evaluations by mid-January and the top scripts will move on to second tier readers shortly thereafter, with the producing theatres receiving the chosen scripts from that level around the first of April.

Positive responses from playwrights are being received as well. Karen Lewis says, "AACT is far more organized - and/or considerate - than many 'professional' entities out there." She later said, "more people should understand the history of Community Theatres and how vital they are to artistic life all over the country. My childhood was and much of my love of theatre was fostered by my work at The Little Theatre of Alexandria. It was an amazing organization."

"Thanks for making this great effort to promote new plays and new authors," commented Jerry DiCairano.

"One of my fellow writers here in Sarasota had a wonderful experience with your competition last year and that encouraged me to participate," said Ron Pantello. "Such events, festivals and



contests are important for playwrights otherwise much of our creative efforts would never be heard."

Jim Danek responded in an email, "I think it is truly amazing that this entire program was able to come together and that AACT has now had the opportunity to provide this venue to budding playwrights for two consecutive years and hopefully many more in the future. Keep up the good work."

Considering that the goal of the play contest was to facilitate the process for theatres to produce previously unpublished plays and help playwrights have their work produced, AACT is gratified to produce goodwill in the process of accomplishing that goal. ♦

Please follow the contest on our **Facebook page**, facebook.com/AACT.org, or at **aact.org**.



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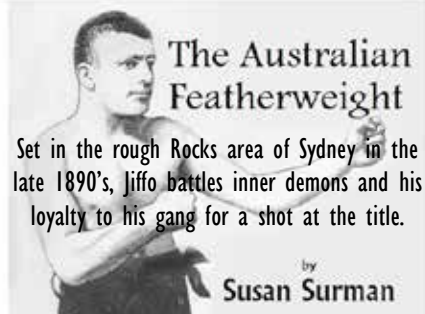


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What's Trending?

by Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director

Trends can help you understand what is happening or prepare before a trend reaches your theatre.

Season Ticket sales are up according to a November 2014 survey sent to about 2000 theatres. Responses were received from approximately 7%: 147 theatres in 42 states.

For a number of years, theatres have noted that season ticket sales have lagged. But now they seem to be making a comeback. Season ticket sales this season are up for 32.87% of theatres responding that they sell season tickets with another 41.26% describing their sales as holding steady. Only 25.87% were selling less season tickets than they did the previous year. Season tickets are sold by 90.48% of theatres responding and 2.72% are thinking about selling them.

Season ticket sales are important to theatres. Delta Center Stage in Greenville, MS noted, "Season Ticket sales represent well over 50% of our total attendance revenue." Citrus County Art League, Inc. in Hernando, FL, reported, "We have had about a 25% increase in season tickets this year vs. last year." Titusville (FL) Playhouse has seen tremendous increases, "Over the past 3 years season tickets have grown 210 percent."

Theatres were also asked to describe their season tickets. "Flex" tickets that allow patrons to make reservations prior to each show are sold by 71.67% of those that described their tickets, with 60.47% of those selling only flex tickets. Traditional season tickets with the whole season reserved in advance are sold by 56.67% of the theatres, with half those also selling flex tickets. Flex tickets only are sold by 44.33% of the theatres, traditional only by 28.33%, and both by 28.33%. Most theatres selling flex tickets (95.16%) allow them to be used in any quantity from one per show to all on the same show.

When asked, "If sales are up, what did you do to help make that happen?" Forty-four theatres responded. Most often mentioned (by 17 theatres) were promotional efforts. From North Fork Community Theatre, Mattituck, NY, "We marketed it more, and

people responded. We doubled the number of season tickets from 100 to 200 in one season."

Even theatres cited better show selection, especially better known, less risky shows, but also inclusion of new plays. Several mentioned a blockbuster show in the current or previous season or during season ticket sales. Down sales was actually a success for Billings (MT) Studio Theatre, "Although we are down this year, we still had the second largest season ticket sale in our history second only to last year which contained *Shrek* and *Les Miserables*." (*Ragtime* was specifically mentioned by another theatre.) One theatre gave credit to the improving economy and another said, "Higher attendance at last year's shows expanded our reach." The HART Theatre in Waynesville, NC attributed increased sales to an "expanded season and a capital campaign bringing more attention."

Four theatres attributed increased sales to improved production quality. Four noted a new venue lead to increased sales. "We've been in a permanent space for almost 4 years and it has helped us establish a following," stated Lantern Theatre in Conway, AR. Several raised single ticket prices to provide a greater discount on season tickets or did a better job of making patrons aware of the discount.

A number of other specific tactics were shared by theatres, including opening night passes for first timers at Rosedale Community Players in Southfield, MI; a family package option with the shows most suited for family attendance at Erie (PA) Playhouse; personalized letters to past season ticket buyers of Circle Players Inc. in Nashville, TN; an intensive telephone campaign by Quincy (IL) Community Theatre; and Chico (CA) Theater Company cited more use of social media. Prescott (AZ) Center for the Arts surveyed its audience last season with choices of shows and Hanover (PA) Little Theatre is "very, very flexible about exchanges." In La Plata, MD, Port Tobacco Players created beneficial word of mouth.

Tacoma (WA) Little Theatre has "added bonus incentives for our season ticket holders. Each show they have a "free" item, from a

continued on next page

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Trending continued from page 17

free cookie to a Christmas cracker with a surprise inside. Each show has something different for them."

Next up in "What's Trending" is box office trends. Check it out in the March-April issue of *Spotlight*.

To participate in the survey, be sure your theatre's email is in the AACT database. The Box Office Trends survey will be emailed to theatres in early January. If you are not an AACT member, you are benefiting from AACT's annual "Big" mailing of this issue of *Spotlight*. To continue receiving *Spotlight* join or renew your AACT membership at aact.org or 866-OurAACT (687-2228). ♦

Artie's Advocacy Tip



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Auditions: What Directors Look For

Ever wonder what directors look for at auditions? Do they expect fully realized characters? What role does an actor's attitude play in casting? Do directors in sizeable communities with large performance spaces have different needs/wants than those in smaller communities with more limited facilities? To find out, we interviewed award-winning directors from a variety of theatres—and their answers were surprisingly consistent.

Directors from large theaters included Rick Kerby (Manatee Players, Bradenton, FL), Murray Chase (Venice Theatre, Venice, FL), and Tim Jebson (Midland Community Theatre, Midland, TX). Smaller theaters were represented by Sue Ellen Gerrells (South City Theatre, Alabaster, AL), Kristy Meanor (Wetumpka Depot Players, Wetumpka, AL), and Lynn Nelson (Tupelo Community Theatre, Tupelo, MS).

Beforehand

Cold readings (reading from the script with little to no preparation), is the preferred audition format for non-musicals. But while

you may not know which lines you will be asked to read, you certainly should familiarize yourself with the play, and know which part or parts you are best suited for. Buying or borrowing a copy of the script is a great help. Study not only the character's lines, but what other characters say about him or her. Learn as much as you can about the time and place of the play's setting. Directors appreciate that sort of preparation—and view you more favorably as a result. Sue Ellen Gerrells says, "Arm yourself with as much information as possible about that director/theatre's audition process so you can be comfortable when auditioning."

Most companies post audition information on their websites, including how the auditions will be managed. Musicals require dancing and singing, and audition announcements often include suggestions like "wear comfortable clothing and shoes, and be prepared for movement." Musical auditions often require that you come prepared with a song and sheet music. Murray Chase recommends you come prepared: "...bring sheet music and 16 bars of a song to sing." If you follow those guidelines, say our panelists, you'll indicate that you are serious about your participation, and someone who listens and takes direction well.

Attitude is everything

During the audition, our panel uniformly agrees, they look for creativity and willingness to take direction. Sue Ellen Gerrells wants actors who will "come out and play by making creative choices." Kristy Meanor looks for people "who listen and make every effort to follow through with the simple directions I give. I also look for actors who can smile, relax, and have a good time. If I get an idea of who they are as a person, then it makes casting easier for me."

Lynn Nelson looks for "someone who can be natural on stage. If it's someone I've not worked with, I want to know how well they follow directions...and how creative they are."

Tim Jebson expects people to "get out of their comfort zones and be willing to experiment and try something new and different."

"Arm yourself with as much information as possible."

All directors interviewed agreed that an actor's attitude plays a crucial role in casting. Says Gerrells, "Be yourself. If I'm going to work with you — take you into a family for 6-8 weeks — I want to see who you are and how you are to work with." Jebson adds, "Directors want you to succeed and find the right actors - treat the auditions as a chance to perform, not a chance to fail." Jebson also emphasizes that actors at audition are under scrutiny on stage and off, and "those who have a bad attitude and do not cooperate will be remembered at the next set of auditions."

Knowns & unknowns

Choosing known versus unknown actors is another area of agreement. All panelists stated they liked to have a mix.

"At our theatre," explains Kristy Meanor, "we have a core company of strong actors who I call on frequently. But in any given show, we have a healthy balance of newbies and regulars. If we are not working to bring in new talent, then I feel we are not keeping 'community' in community theatre. We provide opportunities for new talent in supporting roles and very often those folks blossom into future leads for us. On the same note, many strong actors who are



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cast as the lead in one show, may very well be supporting or chorus in a future show.”

Nelson agrees: “I like a good balance. It’s good for the show and it’s good for our theatre, and new people usually draw new audience members.”

Turn-offs (and turn-ons)

What turns directors off at an audition? A variety of things—all related to an actor’s fear of failure: being rude to others, nervous gestures such as shuffling feet or playing with hair, excuses, hesitancy, actors who insist on reading three and four times for a scene they’ve already read, and the words “I can’t.”

What turns directors on? Big smiles, positive energy, good attitude, an actor having fun, trying new things, working with others, being respectful of the process.

Understand the process

Being respectful of the process means taking time to understand it. The director normally makes the final decision on casting, but others may provide input as well. With a musical, for example the music director and choreographer will typically be involved, providing the director with insight into the skill—and potential—of each person auditioning. Actors need to give these people the same attention as the director, responding to their suggestions or direction, if given.

If you find yourself fearful of auditioning, you're not alone

Some companies use a casting committee for all productions—musical or not. “The director, of course, has final say,” explains Lynn Nelson about her company’s process. “And no one on the committee can be related to anyone auditioning. They give the director good input and someone to bounce ideas off of.”

If you find yourself fearful of auditioning, you’re not alone. There are several good books that provide guidance and tips [check the AACT Bookstore on aact.org], and some local theatres provide audition workshops.

“The fear of auditioning keeps many talented folks from showing up and being a potential asset to our company,” says Kristy Meanor. “So, we have started hosting audition workshops to help take the mystery out of what we do. I held one recently in prep for a musical I am directing, and had 10 very talented folks show up. I was delighted that eight of those who attended the workshop showed up for the audition, very prepared and confident.”

Final thoughts

Don’t ever think of auditions as adversarial. Directors are creative people, too, often working under pressure to choose the best possible cast based on what they see and hear at auditions.

“I try to keep an open mind about actor ‘types,’” says Murray Chase. “I’ve seen some brilliant out-of-the-box casting over the years...and made some good choices along those lines. Very little has to be clear-cut. I cast a lady as both Dromios some years ago while directing *The Comedy of Errors*. That’s one of the best choices I ever made. Not only did she pull it off, but it opened an entire realm of possibility for casting the remainder of the show—which took on a sense of fun we wouldn’t have had otherwise. I try to be color-blind in casting choices (although it would be difficult to cast a white Frederick Douglas or a black Ben Franklin). The audience really doesn’t care, and I have a better range of talent and choices for roles.”

Says Rick Kerby: “The hardest part of auditions for me is disappointing those who are not cast, or not cast as they had hoped. We always give each of them a personal phone call to say thank you and encourage them to come back.”

Whether directing a small show on a shoestring budget or an extravaganza in a state-of-the-art facility, directors want the same thing: talent, a positive attitude, and a willingness to take direction. There are no guarantees, of course, but it’s safe to say that an actor who projects those qualities at auditions has a better chance of being cast. ♦



Sue Ellen Gerrells, Artistic Director of South City Theatre (Alabaster, AL), Community Theatre Division Festival Vice Chair for Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC), and AACT Board Member and Vice President Public Relations interviewed the participants and contributed her knowledge as a director to this article.

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Other popular shows include the musicals *The Honky Tonk Angels* and *The Honky Tonk Angels Holiday Spectacular*, and the plays, *Stories My Grandmother Told Me* and *A Southern Belle Primer (or Why Princess Margaret Could Never Be A Kappa Kappa Gamma)*, the latter based on the best-selling, cult-classic book of the same title.

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Innovative "production enhancement tools" including the centerpiece of its ShowGO! product line: the Right On Cue Services (ROCS) rehearsal accompaniment interface, Show|Ready. Powered by ROCS, its aim is to provide customers with the best rehearsal accompaniment tool on the market. ShowGO! also features Transposition Express, Cinevative customized video spots, the Scene Partner App, and more.

Saturday Night Fever The Musical will be released in 2015, along with other major acquisitions for TRW's contemporary Broadway collection.

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The National Community Theatre Management Conference will be held June 22-24 just prior to AACTFest 2015 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, MI. This educational gathering is for anyone with responsibility for managing a community theatre and brings together administrators from all levels of avocational theatre. From the volunteer who "runs things around here" to the "just starting" part-time administrator to the full time professional manager... all are welcome.

The Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC) is modeled after the renowned National Full Time Community Theatre Directors Conference (often called the "Madison Conference"). Learning is through a series of intensive, topic specific, round table discussions with participants sharing experiences - both problems and solutions. Participants will prioritize and suggest topics through a pre-conference questionnaire.

The Community Theatre Management Conference can send you home with an idea that will pay for your trip, a renewed enthusiasm for your theatre management job, and a nationwide network of colleagues! And because the CTMC will be held immediately preceding the national festival in Grand Rapids, you can attend two events in one trip.

Registration Fee

\$270 AACT Member

\$345 non-member

\$50 early bird discount if register by May 5

Covers all sessions, materials, snacks, and a copy of *Boards in the Spotlight* by Twink Lynch

Hotel: Amway Grand Plaza

\$129 (plus tax) 1-4 in room

Registration information and more details available at www.aact.org/15 or the AACT office (toll free) 866-OurAACT (687-2228). ♦

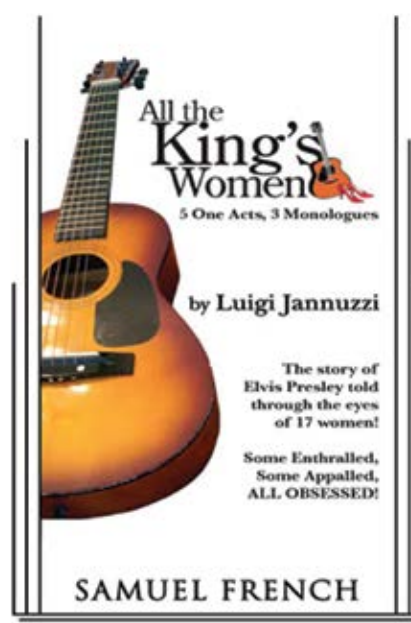
National Community Theatre Directors Conference

Making a career of managing a community theatre is a rewarding, challenging, and, often, lonely life! Only a small number of community theatres have a paid, full time managing director, so networking with peers and talking with someone else who truly understands the job can be difficult.

Enter the biennial National Community Theatre Directors Conference. In November of odd-numbered years, those lonely, challenged, dedicated directors gather to share stories of challenges and solutions, learn about various theatre operations, and meet with colleagues from throughout the country. This intensive conference will be November 21-24, 2015 for individuals employed in a full-time administrative position in a community theatre organization. The conference is conducted by the University of Wisconsin - Madison and co-sponsored by AACT.

For further information go to www.DirectorsConference.org or contact the AACT office. ♦

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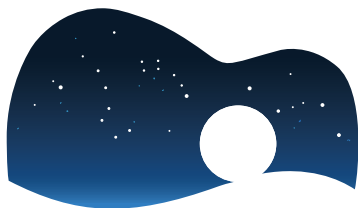
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Michael Kimball is the recipient of the 2014 **John Gassner Memorial Playwriting Award** for his play *Duck and Cover*, which was also awarded Best Play at the Northern Writes Festival in Bangor, Maine. *Duck and Cover* is about a sheltered American family in 1962 suburban Massachusetts trying to maintain its innocence in the era of civil rights riots, birth control pills, rock 'n' roll music, and an unexpected visit from closeted trumpeter Uncle Bunny and his African-American band-mate and lover—on the night that the Cuban Missile Crisis begins.

The John Gassner Memorial Playwriting Award is presented annually by the New England Theatre Conference, and fosters new playwrights and scripts through this important competition established by Molly Gassner, wife of theatre historian John Gassner. The Award was created in 1967 to honor the late John Gassner (1903-1967) for his lifelong dedication to all aspects of professional and academic theatre.



Heleen Peppie Photography

Michael Kimball

Duluth, MN – Mayor Don Ness proclaims November 17th **Duluth Playhouse Day** as part of Duluth Playhouse's 100th Birthday celebration.

The Duluth Playhouse mission is to educate, entertain and involve the region, and has produced over 1000 productions in 100 years. The Playhouse is dedicated to offering opportunities in theatre arts that inspire and enrich people's lives and contributes to the vitality of the region. Each year, more than 600 youth grow and learn through the children's theatre and education program. ♦



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New Roles

Houston, TX - **Queensbury Theatre**, which will open in March, has hired a new Executive Director. **Randal "Randy" West**, who has been serving as Interim Executive Director of the C.L. Hoover Opera House in Junction City, KS, assumes the new role with the theatre's opening. He will take on the task of helping Queensbury Theatre find its identity. Randy honed his Executive Director theatre skills at the Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts in Fairfield, IA and was the Theatre Coordinator for the City of Phoenix, AZ for five years. One of Randy's career highlights includes working beside Stephen Sondheim and George Furth, directing their musical, *Merrily We Roll Along*. The Queensbury Theatre, formerly the Country Playhouse, began construction on its 21,000-square-foot theater on Queensbury Lane near Town and Country Boulevard in August. The old theater was demolished to make room for the new construction, with the project costing roughly \$6.5 million.

Lafayette, LA - **Cite des Arts** announces the appointment of **Daniel Ladmirault** as its new Program Director, replacing **Christy Leichty**, who led the company from 2010 to 2014. Daniel brings more than three decades of theatre experience to Cite des Arts at all levels, from community theatre to professional theatre, as well as film, video, and television credits. He attended the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. After spending years doing theatre, commercials, movies, and voiceovers in Louisiana, he moved to Washington, D.C. in 1997, and was a company member at Washington Shakespeare Company. He began his new duties in September 2014. ♦

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Schedule

Wednesday, February 18

Early Arrivals

Thursday, February 19

Morning - Executive Committee & Finance Committee

Afternoon & Evening - Strategic Planning Retreat (Board, Committees, and other volunteers)

Friday, February 20

Committee Meetings

Evening - Reception with local theatres hosted by Metrolina Theatre Association

Saturday, February 21

Morning & early afternoon - Committee Meetings

Afternoon - Board

Sunday, February 22

Departures

Questions? Hotel and travel - contact Jill Patchin at jill@aact.org;
Meetings - contact Julie Crawford at julie@aact.org ♦

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Spotlight Award Honors Keegan Arnold

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.

Benjamin “Keegan” Arnold was honored with the AACT Spotlight Award at **Lakeside Community Theatre’s** annual banquet on July 12, 2014. Lakeside Community Theatre (LCT) is located in The Colony, which is a suburb of Dallas, TX. AACT State Contact, Susan Austin, was on board to help present the award.

Keegan Arnold has been quite an asset to LCT over the past six years. His many talents include acting, writing, directing, and set designing. Keegan served on Lakeside Community Theatre’s board of directors for two years as member at large, and acted as a liaison between the theatre and The Colony’s city council on improvements to the building. Keegan also spearheaded the renovation of LCT’s stage, lobby, and box office. Through his insightful efforts, Keegan created a community awareness, which has certainly increased the interest and growth of LCT.

Lakeside Community Theatre’s awards banquet is an entertaining way to honor all of its actors and volunteers! The banquet is styled like the Oscars, and the event gives the community an opportunity to dress up and celebrate! In between award

announcements, LCT’s board of directors presented video skits and parody music videos, in a humorous look at the theatre’s day-to-day operations!

When the Spotlight Award was presented to Keegan Arnold he remarked, “I am totally overwhelmed by receiving



Keegan Arnold (center, holding award) received the Spotlight Award at Lakeside Community Theatre’s awards banquet. Joining him were (l-r) Paul Niles, Camille Monae, AACT State Contact Susan Austin, Donna Arnold, Faye Moritz, Mark Palmer, David J Wallis, Deborah Roche, and Joan Lux.

this AACT award and I’m grateful to be a part of the Lakeside Community Theatre family. I want to thank my family, LCT, and AACT for deeming me worthy of this award!” ♦



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The Woodward/Newman Drama Award is an exclusive honor offered by Bloomington Playwrights Project, (BPP), sponsored by the Newman's Own Foundation, remembering the many great dramas Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman performed in together.

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\$10 submission fee

Submission deadline: March 1, 2014 (postmark, must arrive by March 10)

No email submissions

Details: newplays.org



National Arts and Humanities
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The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, is accepting applications for the

2015 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards.

The twelve award-winning programs this year will each receive \$10,000 and an invitation to accept their award from the President's Committee's Honorary Chairman, First Lady Michelle Obama, at a ceremony at the White House.

After-school and out-of-school time arts and humanities programs are encouraged to apply.

Application: nahyp.org/how-to-apply/

Deadline: February 2, 2015, 5:00 PM PST



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Details: artsreach.com/new-york-conference-2015.php

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Keynote addresses by Paata Tsikuridze and Kristen Linklater.

Details and registration at: setc.org

What has been your most successful fundraiser?

Responses on AACTList

(to sign up for AACTList, go to aact.org/aactlist)

By Far, our *DANCING WITH THE STARS* event is our most successful fundraiser. We are going into our eighth year, and they have been consistently netting well over \$100,000 each year since the second year.

Lou Ursone

Curtain Call, Inc., Stamford, CT
curtaincallinc.com

Our easiest, and in many ways our most successful, is the *NO-SHOW BALL*. Every year we send out invitations to *not attend* another fundraising event, just send the money. We try to tie it to a specific facility need, just to give us something “sexy” to ask for. My first year we asked for help in paying off the mortgage. By simply sending invitations to our list, we brought in more than \$16,000, almost all pure profit. Over the 14 years we have done the “non-event” we have brought in an average of \$9000, and have been able to pay off the mortgage, put on a new roof, renovate the lobby and bathrooms, put a new floor in the theatre, upgrade our house and work light to LED, renovate the office, and many more projects. It takes only a few hours of staff time, and almost no volunteers. A hugely successful project every year, and a very grateful donor base that gets invited to a few dozen events every year.

Steve Koehler, Managing Director

Civic Theatre of Greater Lafayette, Lafayette, IN
www.lafayetteticivic.org

Our most successful fundraiser was a benefit performance of *Love Letters* starring Philip Bosco and Beth Fowler (both Tony Award nominees) in honor of our 75th Anniversary season in 2007. We made over \$10,000 and got a lot of publicity. We had a slate of other activities that year as well, including a brick naming campaign, a tricky tray (which actually netted over \$7,000), and a black tie gala.

We are about to begin our ‘Take A Seat’ campaign as we prepare to install 188 new seats next year; our goal is to raise \$25,000 over two years.

Brian Feldman, Box Office Manager

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Responses on Facebook

(facebook.com/AACT.org)

We do a *Haunted Theatre* for several weekends in the fall. In the spring we have a street dance and silent art auction (donated items) called *Music, Monet & Margaritas*. Both are fun and extremely successful.

Lynn Harper Nelson

Tupelo Community Theatre, Tupelo, MS
tct.ms

facebook.com/Tupelo-Community-Theatre

A *Halloween Hoot Costume Party* - our very first fund raiser - with food, drinks, live music, and silent auction. We are a relatively new group struggling to get funds. We made \$2000.

Nancy Jones Foote

Sunriver Stars Community Theater, Sunriver, OR

sunriverstars.org

facebook.com/sunriverstars

In June, NFCT had our *Make-Me-a-Match Gala*. We were able to auction NY Mets box-seats, back stage passes to Broadway shows, original works by local artists, and a myriad of other donations from local merchants. Plus, we had entertainment from NFCT members and the cast of our Youth On Stage's production of *The Wedding Singer*.

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Festival Commission member Kristi Quinn shares a laugh with Adjudicator Morrie Enders after a workshop session at the Region X Festival of One Act Plays, held in Kaiserslautern, Germany October 10-12, 2014. Kristi was also adjudicating at the festival.



Ron Ziegler



Ron Ziegler

Festival Commission Chair Jim Walker (right) presents a years-of-service pin to former Region X Representative Vikki Hanrahan at the awards ceremony of the Region X Festival of One Act Plays, held in Kaiserslautern, Germany, October 10-12, 2014. Jim served as Festival Commissioner for the festival.

Rich Gannon



Several National AACT awards were presented at the Illinois Theatre Association Community Theatre Festival, held in Springfield, IL October 24-26, 2014. Pictured above from left to right: Ron McDaniel, DLO Music Theatre (Danville), Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award; AACT Treasurer Frank Peot; Jon Lynn, Kirk Players (Mundelein), Special Recognition Award (for Kirk Players); Alvin Blasco, Community Players of Streator (Streator), Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award; AACT Illinois State Contact Richard Gannon.

Florida Theatre Conference Chair and AACT Board Member Rick Kerby chats with adjudicator (and AACT Education Committee Member) Kathy Pingel between sessions of the Florida Community Theatre Festival, November 8, 2014 in Gainesville.



Ron Ziegler



David Cockerell

AACT Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell visits with Americans for the Arts Meeting and Event Associate Mosade Edwards at the National Arts Marketing Project Conference (NAMPC) in Atlanta, GA November 7-10, 2014.

Ron Ziegler



Florida State Contact Kristofer Geddie addresses the crowd at the awards ceremony of the Florida Theatre Conference Convention and Festival, held in Gainesville, FL November 5-9, 2014.



Whose Theatre Is It, Anyway?

by Twink Lynch

Probably the issue causing the most pain is that of “ownership.” Whose theatre is it, anyway? Who owns it? The Members? The Board? The Staff? It seems obvious that the person(s) who are perceived (or who claim) to “own” the theatre get to say what happens and who does what. In other words, where there is “ownership,” there is power.

For years, I have been struggling to identify “stages of development” of community theatres and have come to believe there are five: “producing,” “organizing,” “expanding,” “staffing,” and “partnering.” I believe there is a natural evolution from the simpler form to the more complex, if resources (time, talent, money, and leadership) are available, and if the conflict over ownership is resolved in a win/win climate.

When a new theatre is born, typically a group of people “get together to put on a play.” Their energy is focused on production tasks (“operations”): selecting the play, recruiting

where there is "ownership"
there is power

the cast and crew, finding a facility, rehearsing, designing and building sets, costumes, etc., advertising, selling tickets, creating a playbill, celebrating, cleaning up and paying the bills. Temporary leadership assignments are made: director, business manager or producer, maybe even an ad hoc “steering committee.” Basically, this is a group of peers in which ownership and responsibility are shared equally.

If the need to do theatre is very strong in this group, and if their initial efforts meet with some success, they will probably form an “association” and adopt a name (“Red Barn Players”). There is a definable membership, earned by paying dues and/or working on production. Power and authority reside in this group of members and meetings are held monthly, even weekly, so decisions can be made by the whole group (“committee of the whole”). If there is a Steering Committee, it is guided by this group, and it is usually kept on a short leash.

This egalitarian structure changes, at least on paper, when the group incorporates, because law requires a legal entity responsible to the state government called the “Board” — usually “of Directors.”

Now there is a group of people, a little “more equal” than the others, who are held accountable for the decisions made, particularly in regard to money, but also in regard to the relevant state laws regarding non profit organizations. If the group applies for a 501(c)(3) designation, the Board is further legally accountable to the Internal Revenue Service for appropriate filings and fulfillment of non profit purposes.

Where now does the ownership reside and the power lie? For some groups, this is apparently a tough transition, and although

the Board has the legal authority and responsibility in the eyes of the government, the members often demand that the Board run all decisions by the membership before final adoption. In this case, there has been no real delegation of power to the Board — the real ownership and power still belong to the Members.

As the group grows, this situation is going to prove to be very inefficient, not to say downright impossible to maintain. If the programming gets to the point that hiring staff is considered, and the delegation issue has never been resolved with the Board, real debilitating conflict could ensue.

What is it that keeps some groups from delegating real power and authority to the Board? I believe it is related to issues of trust and safety. If I turn over authority and responsibility to you (give up some of my “ownership” or power to say what happens and who does what), will there still be a place for me in the organization? How will you treat my needs and opinions and feelings? Will you keep me informed? After all, knowledge is power as well. Will the organization become what I hope it will become? Will you, at some future time, return the favor and delegate some power and authority to me? ♦

Twink Lynch wrote a regular column on boardmanship 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 36 for ordering information.

Reprinted from *Boards in the Spotlight* (page 49). Originally appeared in Spotlight, July 1995.

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Friends We'll Miss

by Marsha Amato-Greenspan

Sherman Carl Ward, Jr.

November 14, 1921 – October 1, 2014

Every once in a while, a person comes along who provides leadership, mentoring, as well as friendship, influences progressive thinking, and inspires us to reach for the stars. AACT associates, Eastern States Theater Association (ESTA) associates, actors, directors, playwrights, audiences and other theatre professionals found this in Sherman C. Ward, Jr.

From his career as a bacteriologist to artist to playwright, Sherman always kept busy. A highly creative man, he excelled in painting, sculpture, and theatre. Influential in founding ESTAFest Original Works Festival in Newark, Delaware in 2006, Sherman wanted playwrights to expand their knowledge and craft and have a means to produce their works. He funded and created the criteria for an Outstanding Playwright Award for the festival, and in 2012 the Sherman C. Ward, Jr. Excellence in Playwriting Award was founded.

Many felt Sherman's influence. He was a leader in community theatre for more than 50 years, during which time he founded the Musicrafters of Camden County and was well known as a skillful and creative director. With the Musicrafters, he directed, his wife stage-managed, his three children acted,



and everyone built the sets. Community theatre for Sherman was an adventure for his whole family. He served on the AACT Board as the Region II Rep for eleven years, was president of the New Jersey Theatre League, treasurer of ESTA, and an adjudicator for the Theatre Association of New York State (TANYS).

He directed a national AACTFest finalist play that went on to represent the United States at the Liverpool International Theatre Festival in Nova Scotia. In 2004, he was Playwright in Residence at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. He was honored by AACT with the Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award in 2005, and he was inducted as an AACT Fellow and received the Art Cole Lifetime of Leadership Award in 2011. In 2008, TANYS established an annual award in his name to honor a volunteer over the age of 65 who has participated in community theatre for over 25 years.

Sherman pushed many of us to strive for the best in our art. Although he is gone, his spirit lives on in those who knew him, and we will continue to celebrate him everyday in our work. Here's to you, Sherman! Thanks for all you did to inspire us. ♦

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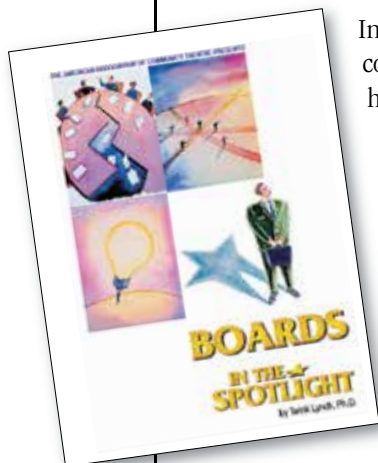
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When	Who/What	Where	Information
Jan 15-17	Mississippi Theatre Association ★ State Festival 2015	MS Oxford	662-418-3870 www.mta-omlinr.org
Jan 18-20	Maryland Community Theatre Festival Assn ★ State Festival 2015	MD Lexington Park	301-751-2736 www.mctfa.org
Feb 6-8	Arkansas Community Theatre Association ★ State AACTFest 2015	AR Pine Bluff	501-626-5971 www.arcta.net
Feb 13-15	Nebraska Association of Community Theatres ★ State AACTFest 2015	NE Lincoln	402-228-1801 www.nebact.org
Feb 14	Long Beach Playhouse ★ California Community Theatre Festival	CA Long Beach	858-602-6562 www.lbplayhouse.org
Feb 18-22	American Association of Community Theatre 2015 Winter Meetings	NC Charlotte	866-687-2228 www.aact.org
Feb 19-22	Wisconsin Association of Community Theatres ★ WACTFest 2015	WI Baraboo	608-393-6484 www.wact.org
Feb 20-22	Idaho Association of Community Theatre ★ Idaho AACTFest 2015	ID Boise	509-218-6282 www.facebook.com/pages/ IACT/1430575820539444
Feb 25-Mar 1	Theatre New Mexico ★ New Mexico State Festival	NM Artesia	575-748-1288 www.theatrenm.org
Feb 28-Mar 1	New England Theatre Conference ★ Region I AACTFest	CT Torrington	860-489-7180 www.netonline.org

★ Indicates festival in the AACTFest 2015 Cycle

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

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