

spotlight

September/October 2015 \$2.50

american association of community theatre

AACTFest 2015

photos, awards, stories



Trending
How we raise money

**AACT New York
Adventure 2016**

How to
**Start a New
Theatre**



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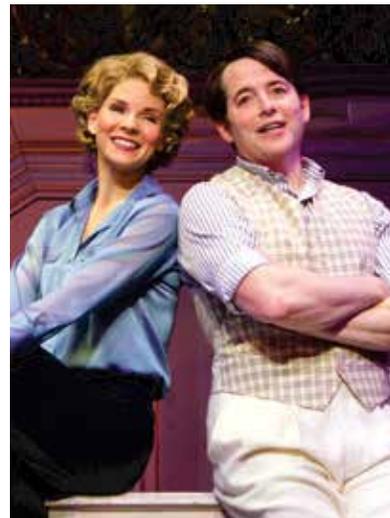
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Murray Chase
AACT President
2015-2017

I'm just a couple of weeks removed from the always rewarding experience that is AACTFest, our national theatre festival. Now before you discard this article as just a love note about Grand Rapids, MI, and Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, please read on a bit.

Yes, both the city and the theatre were everything we had hoped they would be. The city was delightful, and the theatre definitely knew how to host a big gig. Either the city or the festival by itself was worth spending a week there.

We are where theatre starts in this country, we are where it grows, and we are where most of it is manifested.

But, more importantly, AACTFest 2015 proved something to me. My friend Michael Spicer puts it succinctly: **Community theatre is America's theatre.** We are where theatre starts in this country, we are where it grows, and we are where most of it is manifested.

Literally thousands of actors, technicians, designers, directors, and musicians participated in this one event: whether at quads, state, and regional festivals, or at AACTFest. And literally thousands more hosted those quad, state, and

regional festivals: organizers, house staffs, and volunteers. All passionate, all proud, all dedicated. Leading to this one event.

But not really.

Because the two-year process **is the event.** It is the doing, in and of itself—the passion, the pride, the dedication, **the work**—that is AACTFest. It exemplifies community theatre. We share with each other, we encourage and cheer each other, and we grieve with each other.

And we bring it all back to our home theatres, and continue to do what we all do—countless thousands of volunteers and staff entertaining and enriching millions of audience members...for our own communities.

As we continue our work this season—and the next and the next—let's be proud of our work...and our community. Let's never stop trying to make both the work and the community better. Because we have a responsibility: we are America's theatre.

Hilarious Comedy Plays!



'Twas the Fight Before Christmas!

Cast: 4 Female, 2 Male Length: Two Acts
Think your family is complicated? Meet the most dysfunctional family you can imagine as they try to navigate Christmas. Peace on earth and good will to all men? Not likely! Ever since her husband died, Mary's horrible adult children have been ruining Christmas. This year, with the help of a suicidal French psychiatrist, Mary is determined to take Christmas back. Hilarious and uplifting Christmas comedy.

My In-laws are Outlaws!

Cast: 5 Female, 2 Male Length: Two Acts
Annie discovers her in-laws are outlaws... and her mother in-law has hired a mad group of assassins to kill her! How will Annie, a mild mannered Librarian, outwit the best of the Italian, Russian and Irish contract killers? This is outrageous, laugh out loud comedy at its best.

The Old People Are Revolting!

Cast: 5 Female, 2 Male Length: Two Acts
Hilarious comedy about seniors seeking revenge! The residents of the Sunshine Retirement Village have had enough: they're revolting! Bursting with eccentric characters and crazy shenanigans the play is great fun to stage and a huge audience pleaser.

Also available...

How To Train Your Husband, Understanding Women, Menopause Made Me Do It, Crazy Ladies! ... and many more!

Order your free perusal script or read online at
www.comedyplays.net

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Contacting AACT

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

On the Cover

Colburn Lambert and James Craig in *Freud's Last Session* from Kokomo Civic Theatre, first place winner at AACTFest 2015



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AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)

Including the 6 winning 2014-2015 national new play festival winners. Each winning play received a premiere production.

Two of the six titles are available in playbook format.

Jellofish

Drama/Comedy. By Jim Henry.

Four World War II veterans have been playing a monthly game of poker and dragging five percent from every pot since 1945, and this "side pot" has grown to a sizable fortune. As Billy, Earl, Kooch and Dale compete, they struggle over what to do with their shared nest egg. Events of their lives are revealed as each player comes upon "history chips," created during the past 50 years by one of the players when a significant event occurred. As the significance of history chips such as Celery, Nazi and Jellofish is revealed, the deeper implications of a lifetime of friendship are explored. Who will be the heir to the fortune? The table is set. Shuffle up and deal.

Play Details:

Cast: 3m., 1w.

Unit set. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes.

Code: J70.



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

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.

Play Details:

Cast: 1m., 4w.

One int. set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes.

Code: E86



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Upcoming Meetings**AACT Executive Committee**

November 20-22, 2015
Madison, WI
Hosted by University of Wisconsin, Continuing Studies

AACT Winter Meetings 2016

February 18-21, 2016
San Antonio, TX

Upcoming Conferences**National Community Theatre Managing Directors Conference**

November 21-24, 2015
Madison, WI
Co-sponsored with the University of Wisconsin, Continuing Studies

AACTFest 2015 Special Thanks

Grand Rapids Civic Theatre and School of
Theatre Arts staff and volunteers
The City of Grand Rapids,
Mayor George K. Heartwell
Experience Grand Rapids, Tim Nelson
Richett Media, Emily Richett, Sarah Cavanaugh
WKTV – Wyoming Kentwood Community Media
WOOD TV Eight West
WGVU – The Morning Show with Shelley Irwin
WJRW Radio
100.5 The River Radio
MLive Media Group – The Grand Rapids Press
Rapid Growth Media
Women's Lifestyle Magazine
WWMT.com

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Founders Brewing Company,
Christina McDonald
Kitchen Sage, Tommy Fitzgerald
Community Theatre Association
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Dan Goggin
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Design Competition and Exhibition
AACTFest workshops presenters
AACT bloggers and video team –
Emily Anderson, Susanne Caviness,
Jake Goldberg, Kim Martin,
Linda Miller, Lynn Nelson, Frank Peot

**Celebrate National Arts
and Humanities Month**

October is National Arts and Humanities
Month. Visit americansforthearts.org
to discover ways to celebrate the arts in your
community.

americansforthearts.org/events/national-arts-and-humanities-month

Spotlight

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kenneth.roberts@usi.biz

Hired/Non-Owned Auto Liability: Who needs it?!



by Ken Roberts

Very few of the nonprofit community theatres across the country own their own vehicles, and therefore can't justify the need for auto liability. Many theatres, when they want to take a show on the road, either borrow a faithful volunteer's vehicle, or rent a truck and/or trailer when they hit the highway. Even when a theatre doesn't perform any productions outside of their own space, they often have employees or volunteers who are running errands on their behalf during the course of day-to-day operations. Many theatres don't own their own facility, so they're not able to produce any shows without transporting their sets, props, costumes, and equipment to the performance venue. These are among the many exposures that our theatres have in the arena of auto liability, and the simple solution to make sure our theatre's assets are not at risk in the event of an accident is HNOA, or hired/non-owned auto liability.

What makes this coverage so essential is that if we are driving our personal vehicle for the theatre's benefit, and we have an accident that is our fault, the theatre can be sued for the recovery of any expenses that the other party incurs for bodily injuries or property damages. Our personal auto insurance is always the primary coverage, but if the damages exceed our personal limits, the theatre would be responsible for the excess, and if the HNOA is not in place, that excess must come from our theatre's assets. Unless we have reserves stashed away to cover that sort of claim, we'll be dedicating funds that we need for operations, and if there aren't enough operating funds to cover it, we're reduced to liquidating valuable assets to pay the bills. A catastrophic auto claim could literally close our theatre without this valuable coverage.

HNOA can be purchased either as an endorsement to the general liability, or on its own as part of a commercial auto policy, depending on how each particular insurance company prefers to address the issue. It's usually less expensive as an endorsement to your general liability, and when written this way, it extends the "per occurrence" limit on our general liability to cover any auto liability exposure that develops when we either rent or borrow

The simple solution to make sure our theatre's assets are not at risk in the event of an accident is HNOA, or hired/non-owned auto liability.

any vehicle for theatre purposes. This even includes the use of personal vehicles for theatre business by theatre employees and volunteers. The requirements to purchase this coverage are usually fairly minor, and vary from company to company, but in any case, the small expense will far outweigh the potential for economic disaster. As careful as we try to be, one accident can have a tremendous impact, so when considering who needs HNOA, the answer is simple: We all do! ♦

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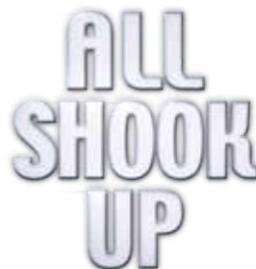
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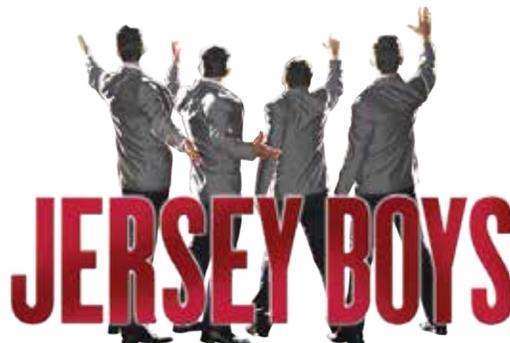
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National Community Theatre Directors Conference

This is the year full time community theatre directors gather in Madison, WI for the biennial National Full Time Community Theatre Directors Conference. The directors share stories of challenges and solutions, learn about various theatre operations, and network with colleagues from throughout the country. This professional development 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.



The National Community Theatre Directors Conference in 2013

Conference features

- Learn of challenges and solutions faced by theatre directors just like you
- Share your own expertise, resources, and stories
- Collect organizational materials from other theatres
- Receive a detailed profile of each theatre represented at the conference
- Compile and receive a “2013-2015 Hits and Misses” list
- Make connections from around the country that you can rely on year-round
- Spend 3 days on the beautiful UW-Madison campus, one block from scenic Lake Mendota and historic State Street with dozens of shops and restaurants
- Return to your job feeling inspired and filled with new ideas!

The conference will again be facilitated by John Viars. He has been Executive Director of the Des Moines Playhouse since 1982, where he has directed and produced over 200 plays and hosted AACT’s first-ever International Community Theatre Festival. He is a charter member and past president of AACT. John is a frequent workshop leader, consultant and recently adjudicated the national AACTFest. He is a recipient of AACT’s David C. Bryant and Art Cole Awards.

Each conference participant brings expertise to share. Topics (identified in advance from those attending) are developed in order of highest group need. The facilitator keeps discussions on track and adds details pertinent to

the topic under discussion. All who wish to contribute may do so by asking questions, identifying specific problems, or providing useful input. Past participants have gone home and implemented ideas that more than paid for the trip!

Registration and Housing

The Lowell Center on the UW-Madison campus serves as conference headquarters. The conference fee (\$375) includes instruction, multiple handouts, administrative support, conference leadership, morning and afternoon coffee/soda breaks, two noon lunches, Sunday group dinner, and incidental conference expenses. Lowell Center housing daily rates are \$94/single, \$106/double (no room tax). Parking (if needed) and daily breakfast are included.

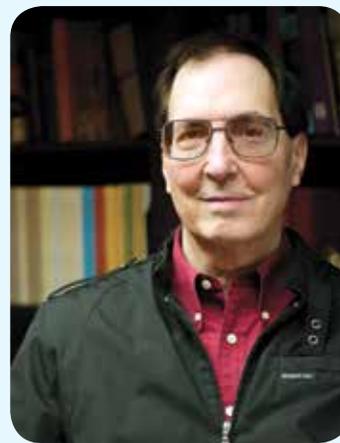
For further information go to aact.org/educational-events or contact the AACT office. ♦

AACT NewPlayFest 2016 Sets First Production

AACT NewPlayFest 2016 kicks off with Windsor Community Playhouse’s season opening production of *Lighthouse* by William Baer September 25, 2015. The production is scheduled to run through October 10.

Lighthouse by William Baer tells the story of Luce Fouchet who is the keeper of the Beach Haven Lighthouse and a professional travel writer. Despite her generally sophisticated, up-beat demeanor, she’s struggling with an unresolved past, a romantic intruder into her present, and the devastating ramifications of an extremely rare, skin disorder known as Xeroderma Pigmentosum (the “sunlight” cancer).

William Baer, a recent Guggenheim fellow, has received the James Wilson Playwriting Award and the New Works of Merit Playwriting Award, and his plays have been produced or read at more than twenty-five American theaters, including the 13th Street Theatre in New York City, Chicago Dramatists, and the Metropolitan Playhouse of New York. One of his ten-minute plays (*Morons*) was chosen “best in show” at the Camino Real Playhouse’s ShowOff



William Baer

Festival, and his most recent full-length play, *Three Generations of Imbeciles*, was chosen for the 2013 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in Saginaw, Michigan. A former Fulbright in Portugal, he’s also been the recipient of an NEA Creative Writing Grant for fiction. A graduate of Rutgers, NYU, Johns Hopkins, and USC, he’s the author of eighteen books including *Times Square and Other Stories*; *Classic American Films: Conversations with the Screenwriters*; “Borges” and *Other Sonnets*; *Conversations with Derek Walcott*; and *Elia Kazan: Interviews*.

Take a Bite of the Big Apple!

AACT New York Adventure 2016

See Broadway shows and experience Manhattan's Times Square with your community theatre friends and AACT family. Make a highlight of your summer of 2016 by joining AACT at this great adventure July 7-10, 2016. Come early or stay late (with a great hotel rate!) and see more of all that NYC has to offer.

The Millennium Broadway Hotel New York will be the host hotel and is in the heart of New York City. Located in Times Square, the Millennium Broadway offers convenient access to Broadway theatres and Fifth Avenue shopping. The hotel is connected to the Hudson Theatre, a beautiful landmark built in 1903.



A room with a view at the Millennium Broadway Hotel

Register NOW for the best deal! Register online at aact.org

Save \$200 by registering by December 1! The early bird rate for AACT members is \$1,200 per person, double occupancy; \$1,575 single occupancy. The early bird rate is good through December 1.

Registration includes three nights hotel, two Broadway Shows, AACT Saturday dinner at the historic Hudson Theatre, Specialty Tours, and more.

Windsor Community Playhouse (WCP) is a family-oriented community theatre directed by a volunteer Board of Directors who are dedicated to providing quality theatre in a community setting. Originated in 1981, WCP features four to five shows per season in the comfortable 75-seat facility, workshops, and children's theatre. WCP provides an exhilarating mix of humorous comedy, intriguing drama, musicals, whimsical children's shows, and festive holiday shows. WCP is conveniently located between Fort Collins, Loveland and Greeley. Named Best Live Entertainment in 2012 and 2013 in northern Colorado, WCP continues to be a popular destination. WCP is dedicated to promoting new, quality theatre, and has performed a number of original scripts. In their desire to promote new talent, WCP has worked with new artist submissions through universities and colleges in northern Colorado.

Windsor Community Playhouse
Windsor, CO
www.windsorplayhouse.org



Only \$250 holds your place. Pay \$250 now and the rest in installments.

Registration includes three nights, but if you want to come in early or stay to see more shows or do some exploring, you can add nights at the Millennium for only \$250 per room, per night. And if you book extra nights through AACT you won't pay taxes on your room!

See the sights of the Big Apple. There will be time to explore the city. If you're not sure of striking out on your own, don't worry! You'll be surrounded by friends who can share your adventures, provide you with tour options, teach you how to use the subway, when it's better to catch a cab, and how to get half-price show tickets. Radio City Music Hall is nearby, as is Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rockefeller Center, and Central Park. Explore Manhattan with a boat tour around the island, a visit to the Statue of Liberty, or just enjoy the theatre shows, the cafes, and restaurants.

Are you thinking of a fundraiser for your theatre?

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AACTFest 2015



AACTFest 2015, was held in the beautiful city of Grand Rapids, Michigan June 23 – 27, 2015. Theatre enthusiasts along with the performing national companies participated in the National Community Theatre Festival known as AACTFest. All the performing theatre companies at AACTFest advanced from their state and region festivals to present their production at the National Community Theatre Festival. Each production was unique and exhibited the excellence being achieved in community theatre across the country and in the U.S. Armed Services overseas.

volunteers of GRCT welcomed the festival, and provided AACTFest with the perfect setting for a spectacular festival. Grand Rapids welcomed AACTFest with a week of beautiful weather (except for that one day with a brief downpour and tornado threat.) The Amway Grand Plaza served as the host hotel, and did not disappoint with its elegance, and historic charm.

Grand Rapids was an exceptional city for the festival. Grand Rapids Civic Theatre and School of Theatre Arts hosted the performances. The staff and

Participants of AACTFest 2015 experienced excellent productions, educational workshops, knowledgeable exhibitors, fun, and networking with other theatre enthusiasts.

National Companies



Winter Flowers by Lily Rusek
Region I
Warner Theatre/Warner Stage Company



Feeding the Moonfish
by Barbara Wiechmann
Region II, **Rochester's Black Sheep Theatre**



Freud's Last Session by Mark St. Germain
Region III, **Kokomo Civic Theatre**



The 39 Steps
by Patrick Barlow and John Buchan
Region III
Elkhart Civic Theatre



The Lady of Larkspur Lotion
by Tennessee Williams
Region IV
Theatre Albany

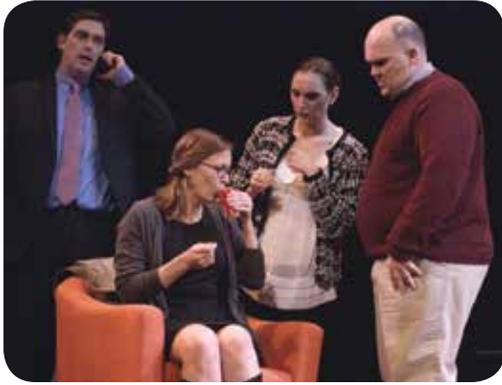


Lone Star
by James McLure
Region IV
Tupelo Community Theatre



The Romancers by Edmond Rostand
Region V
Dassel-Cokato Community Theatre/FungusAmongus Players

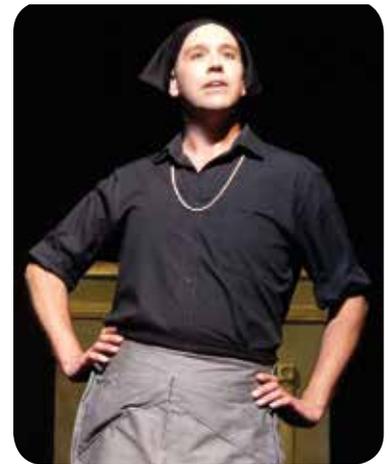
photos by Stephen Bird and Linda M. Lee



God of Carnage by Yasmina Reza, translated by Christopher Hampton
Region VI, **Lantern Theatre/Conway Community Arts Association**



The Nina Variations by Steven Dietz
Region VII, **Platte Valley Players**



I Am My Own Wife by Doug Wright
Region VIII, **The New Group West**



Detachments by Colleen Dodson-Baker
Region X, **SHAPE Performing Arts Centre**



Orphans
by Lyle Kessler
Region IX
Spokane Civic Theatre



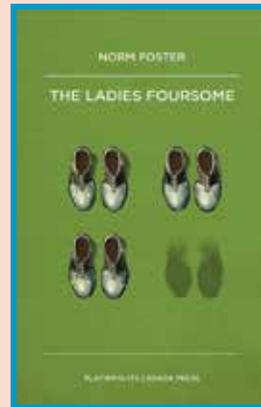
The Opening Reception included a welcome from Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell



Attendees were greeted at the AACTFest registration desk by AACTFest registrar Karen Matheny

continued on next page

The Ladies Foursome
BY NORM FOSTER



ISBN: 9781770914261
4F

OVER THE COURSE OF EIGHTEEN HOLES, SECRETS AND CONFESSIONS UNRAVEL AS FOUR WOMEN DISCUSS LOVE, SEX, CHILDREN, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN. A FUNNY, FAST-PACED, HEARTWARMING STORY OF FRIENDSHIP.

HER2
BY MAJA ARDAL



ISBN: 9781770914544
10F

IN THIS POIGNANT MEDITATION ON THE UNEASY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT, A GROUP OF WOMEN WITH HER2-RELATED BREAST CANCER ARE RECRUITED FOR A CLINICAL DRUG TRIAL.

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continued from previous page



AACTFest started with a welcome reception where Founding Members of the AACT Legacy Society were recognized.



Workshops were held in the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel (and a few at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre) and offered great educational and networking experiences.

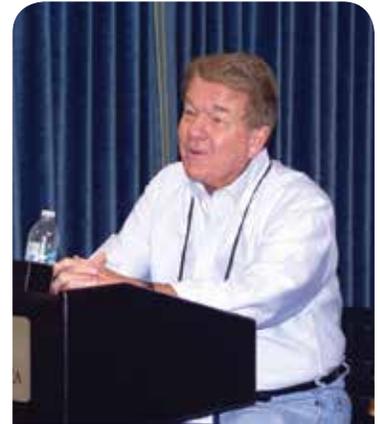
photos by Stephen Bird, David Cockerell, and Linda M. Lee





Special Guest Dan Goggin

held a workshop and signed autographs. AACTFest attendees were thrilled to meet the creator of *Nonsense* roles they had played.



Workshops



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AACTFest 2015 Awards

The AACTFest Awards Evening was spectacular. The Awards Show, with script and musical arrangements by Jim Sohre and direction by Penelope Notter, was amazing. The cast along with live musicians entertained all, and provided a great introduction to each award being presented. A video of the AACTFest 2015 Awards Show can be viewed at vimeo.com/132956513. Courtesy of WKTV. wktv.org

FIRST PLACE

Freud's Last Session by Mark St. Germain
Kokomo Civic Theatre, Kokomo, Indiana
AACT Region III



Cast and Director Steve Hughes accept the First Place Award from AACT President Murray Chase

OUTSTANDING DIRECTOR

Nominees:

Kelly Van Oosbree, *The Nina Variations*

Dan LaMorte, *Detachments*

Mark Costello, *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*

Mark Zweifach, *I Am My Own Wife*

Winner: Steve Hughes, *Freud's Last Session*



Steve Hughes accepts the Outstanding Director Award from AACT Board member Rick Kerby

All photos by Linda M. Lee

SECOND PLACE

I Am My Own Wife by Doug Wright
The New Group West, Cardiff, California
AACT Region VIII



Producer Elaine Litton and Director Mark Zweifach accept the Second Place Award from AACT Past President Gary Walker

THIRD PLACE

The Nina Variations by Stephen Dietz
Platte Valley Players, Brighton, Colorado
AACT Region VII



Cast and Director Kelly Van Oosbree accept the Third Place Award from AACT Vice President of Festivals Kay Armstrong



OUTSTANDING ACTRESS

Nominees:

Heather Hooten as Veronica in *God of Carnage*

Carolyn Lohr as Nina in *The Nina Variations*

Lea H. Dmytryck as Delphie in *Winter Flowers*

Jennifer Bowers as Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore in *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*

Winner: Amanda Byrne as Sylvette in *The Romancers*



Amanda Byrne
accepts the
Outstanding Actress
Award from GRCT
Executive Director
Bruce Tinker

OUTSTANDING ACTOR

Nominees:

Jamie Flanery as Harold in *Orphans*

James Craig as Sigmund Freud in *Freud's Last Session*

Josh Rigo as Treplev in *The Nina Variations*

John McCustion as Ray in *Lone Star*

**Winner: James P. Darvas as Charlotte von Mahlsdorf,
et al in *I Am My Own Wife***



James P. Darvas accepts
the Outstanding Actor
Award from AACT Vice
President of Education
Penelope Notter

OUTSTANDING ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Nominees:

Jane V. Coughlin as Rosie in *Winter Flowers*

Heather Leiendecker as Zoe, et al in *Detachments*

**Winner: Annette Kaczanowski as Annabella/Pamela/
Margaret in *The 39 Steps***



Annette Kaczanowski
accepts the Outstanding
Actress in a Supporting
Role Award from AACT
Past President
Rod McCullough

OUTSTANDING ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Nominees:

Michael Honderich as Clown 1 in *The 39 Steps*

David Kempher as Clown 2 in *The 39 Steps*

Shua Miller as Alan in *God of Carnage*

Peter Hofmann as Garry, et al in *Detachments*

**Winner: Colburn Lambert as C.S. Lewis in
*Freud's Last Session***



Colburn Lambert
accepts the
Outstanding Actor in
a Supporting Role
Award from AACT
Past President
Rod McCullough

AACTFest Awards continue on the next page

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*Jeff Rane Uptown Players

AACTFest Awards continued

OUTSTANDING ACTRESS IN A FEATURED ROLE

Nominees:

Shara Marquez as Guitarist in *The Romancers*

Joy Johnson as Mrs. Wire in *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*

Winner: Alice Santo as Janet, et al in *Detachments*



Alice Santo accepts the Outstanding Actress in a Featured Role Award from AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford

OUTSTANDING ACTOR IN A FEATURED ROLE:

Nominees:

Charlie Foote as Val, et al in *Detachments*

Nathan Taylor as Cletis in *Lone Star*

Winner: Tom Langemo as Straforel in *The Romancers*



Tom Langemo accepts the Outstanding Actor in a Featured Role Award from AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford

OUTSTANDING ENSEMBLE

Nominees:

Orphans, Spokane Civic Theatre

God of Carnage, Lantern Theatre/Conway Community Arts Association

The Romancers, Dassel-Cokato Community Theatre/ FungusAmongus Players

The Lady of Larkspur Lotion, Theatre Albany

Winner: *Detachments*, SHAPE Performing Arts Centre



The cast of *Detachments* accepts the Outstanding Ensemble Award from AACT Secretary Frank Peot

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OUTSTANDING SET DESIGN

Nominees:

David Baker, *Orphans*
David Metcalf, *The Romancers*
Dan LaMorte, *Detachments*
Stephen Felmet, *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*

Winner: Tupelo Community Theatre, *Lone Star*



Tom Booth accepts the Outstanding Set Design Award from AACT Past President Jill Patchin

OUTSTANDING SOUND DESIGN

Nominees:

Steve Hughes, *Freud's Last Session*
Kelly Van Oosbree, *The Nina Variations*
Arthur Ross, Jr., *Detachments*
Theatre Albany, *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*

Winner: The New Group West, *I Am My Own Wife*



Mark Zweifach accepts the Outstanding Sound Design Award from AACT Executive Vice President Carole Reis

OUTSTANDING LIGHTING DESIGN

Nominees:

Kelly Van Oosbree, *The Nina Variations*
Dan LaMorte, *Detachments*
Tupelo Community Theatre, *Lone Star*
The New Group West, *I Am My Own Wife*

Winner: Danielle Suhr, *Feeding the Moonfish*



Diane Mashia accepts the Outstanding Lighting Design Award from AACT Vice President of Public Relations Sue Ellen Gerrells

OUTSTANDING COSTUME DESIGN

Nominees:

Linda Wiesinger, *The 39 Steps*
Renee C. Purdy, *Winter Flowers*
Shannon Egbert, *Detachments*

Winner: Linda Metcalf, *The Romancers*



Linda Metcalf accepts the Outstanding Costume Design Award from AACT Treasurer Tim Jebsen



Tracie Conwill accepts the Backstage Award from AACT Vice President of Planning and Development Chris Surface

BACKSTAGE AWARD

Tupelo Community Theatre

AACTFest Awards continue on page 22

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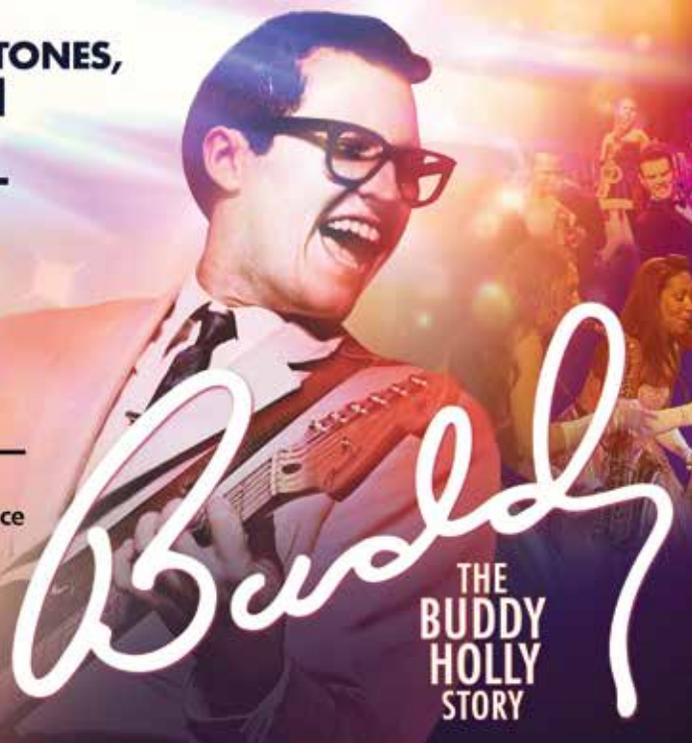
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How to Start a New Theatre

by Kristy Meanor
Wetumpka Depot Players, Executive Director

It's all starry eyed "hey kids, my uncle has a barn, let's put on a show" until the reality of royalties and "what do you mean our patrons have to walk three blocks to use the restroom" quickly draws the curtain on your vision to start a community theatre. While in high school, I heard the same words (except our barn was a dilapidated old train depot) spoken by a talented group of community leaders. Thirty-five years later I am charged with carrying on their vision for the Wetumpka Depot Players. With some solid business planning and a realistic time line, your theatrical hopes could be the "stuff dreams are made of."

Starting Here, Starting Now

Visit the fine resources available on aact.org. From sample bylaws to board building tips, AACT features an excellent step-by-step guide to starting a community theatre. In addition, talk to other groups to start researching what worked and didn't work for them.

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying

Gather your supporters to discuss vision/logistics and address why you want to start a community theatre in your area. From the obvious, "there is no other theatre in town" to "we have three other groups but none of them do original work," take this time to determine your niche. In our case our founders produced a play as a fundraiser for a church youth group. From that event the seed was planted (there was no other theatre in our area) and our group blossomed and a board evolved. Our board always had a diverse enough mix to assure that each show made it from auditions to strike. In addition, until we had a full time staff person (25 years into the journey) the rest of the board managed everything from box office, to marketing, to community involvement.

Fun Home

Where to plug in the ghost light each night will likely be your biggest start up challenge. In our formative years we had a

permanent home in the train depot, but due to circumstances out of our control, there was an eight year period when we were "homeless." Despite the lack of a home base, we still managed to produce four shows per season (plus educational outreach) in



various locations around town. We produced every courtroom drama known to man in our historic courthouse and often rented the high school auditorium. *We basically treated every show we did as a fundraiser and socked away all proceeds towards the purchase of a future home.* In 1999 we discovered our current home right under our noses in a vacant grocery store/meat market (looking like a scene straight out of *Sweeney Todd*) located in our downtown area. Through the dedication of board members and community partners the building was whipped into shape to transform our eyesore of a building into something the community could embrace. We signed a 15-year mortgage and pledged to all hang in there to get the building paid off. Our "build it and they will come" dream was also the ultimate repurposing of an antiquated building into an intimate 160 seat black box complete with parking, restrooms, and accessibility.

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Many emerging groups have overcome location issues by using high school auditoriums, community venues, or renting from other existing theatres. Others look to repurpose existing spaces to meet their needs. In a neighboring town one group signed a lease of \$1 per year to use a vacant movie theatre.

There's No Business Like Show Business

You have established your vision, cultivated board and community support, found your location, paid your royalties, and now the "play's the thing." Is the first project accessible for your local talent pool? Consider hosting an acting workshop prior to auditions to determine if you should tackle a *Steel Magnolias* or a *Waiting for Godot*. Do you have a strong director and a producer/creative team in place? I recently visited a new community theatre and noticed the director's name listed as lighting designer, costume designer, and scenic designer in the playbill. Unfortunately, director burn out is not uncommon and productions will suffer. Making it a board priority to allow the director to fully focus on directing will assure that the first production is one that audiences will remember in a positive way for years to come. Some theatres appoint a producer that manages each production and some delegate a producer for each show. Finally as a board, making the effort to identify, recruit and retain a diverse talent pool (actors, directors, designers, stage managers, etc) for the artistic side of your company should be an ongoing strong effort.

The Best Little Playhouse in Your Town!

Your first show was SRO and everyone in town is buzzing with excitement. What next? The comments below are from some of the Wetumpka Depot's founding members to encourage you as you start building your own history.

"The success of our group is a result of doing strong work, having a good time, being inclusive, appreciating our audiences, and having a diverse group of volunteers that are willing to do whatever it takes to make it work!" Hazel Jones

"We are in a community small enough to have a network of friends over the entire community, yet large enough to have a talent pool to cover "all the bases" needed for the continuing requirements of our theatre. It has become THE PROJECT for everyone in the area to buy in and feel ownership." Watt Jones

"The winning formula for the Depot is composed of three key ingredients—service, family, and community. Service forms the heart of the Depot and every participant is expected to serve in any role needed whether on stage as a performer or set builder, in the lobby selling concessions or tickets, or working the parking lot. The second ingredient of family shines through as the Depot Players through the years have forged deep familial bonds that extend long after the short run of a play. Finally, the Depot has garnered the respect, admiration, and support of our entire community for its consistent excellence that is recognized locally, statewide, and even nationally." Jeff Langham ♦

Kristy Meanor is the Executive Director for the Wetumpka Depot Players. An award winning director, scenic designer, and actor, Kristy is a recipient of the Marian Gallaway Award for her contributions to theatre in Alabama. With a career that spans 35 years in theatre, Kristy has served in leadership roles with the Alabama Conference of Theatre and Southeastern Theatre Conference.

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- Daily Variety

"A surefire, laugh-a-minute hit!"
- The Tucson Times

"Hilarious!"
- American Eagle News

"Superb!"
- Nette Arts

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AACTFest 2015 People's Choice Awards



The AACTFest 2015 People's Choice Awards were selected by AACTFest audience members. Voters made a contribution to the AACT Endowment Fund for each vote submitted.

Favorite Production

Lone Star by James McLure
Tupelo Community Theatre



Directors Tom Booth and Lynn Nelson accept the People's Choice Award for Favorite Production from AACT's Jon Douglas Rake



The cast and crew of Lone Star, Tupelo Community Theatre

Favorite Actor

James Craig
Sigmund Freud in *Freud's Last Session* by Mark St. Germain
Kokomo Civic Theatre



James Craig accepts the People's Choice Award for Favorite Actor from AACT's Jon Douglas Rake

Favorite Actress

Carolyn Lohr
Nina in *The Nina Variations* by Stephen Dietz
Platte Valley Players



Carolyn Lohr accepts the People's Choice Award for Favorite Actress from AACT's Jon Douglas Rake

Magic and Most Memorable Moment

water lighting effect
lighting design by Danielle Suhr
Feeding the Moonfish
by Barbara Wiechmann
Rochester's Black Sheep Theatre



Diane Mashia accepts the People's Choice Award for Magic and Most Memorable Moment from AACT's Jon Douglas Rake

Backstage at the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre was controlled by Festival Commissioner Dave Sheppard, Stage Manager/Technical Director Jim Chervenka, and the backstage crew of GRCT. Their dedication to each performing company was greatly appreciated.



AACTFest 2015 Design Exhibition & Competition Awards

Excellence in Web Design

Designer: **Andrew Bramlage**,
Software: Microsoft Expressions-
Written in HTML/JavaUpdates
Robidoux Resident Theatre,
St. Joseph, Missouri
www.rrtstjoe.org



Excellence in Costume Design

Designer: **Chuck Hazelwood**
Shrek the Musical
Robidoux Resident Theatre,
St. Joseph, Missouri



Excellence in Make Up Design

Designer: **Lindsay Prawitz**
Shrek the Musical
Robidoux Resident Theatre,
St. Joseph, Missouri

Excellence in Overall Design & Presentation

Designer: **Lisa Garza**
Houston Family Arts Center,
Houston, Texas
Peter Pan



Excellence in Costume Design

Designer: **Jessie Kruse**
My Playground
Superior Community Theatre,
Superior, Wisconsin



Excellence in Lighting

for excellent use of Color, Texture, and Atmospheric Lighting (bringing the fun into the auditorium)
Designer: **Scott Johnson**
Disney's Tarzan
Robidoux Resident Theatre,
St. Joseph, Missouri

The annual AACT Membership meeting

included the presentation of AACT National Awards, and the induction of new AACT Fellows.



AACT Fellows pictured at AACTFest 2015:

(l-r, seated) Gary Walker, Kristi Quinn, Penelope Notter, Bill Muchow, Jack Phillips, Jim Walker, Dave Sheppard, Bevie Lord, Rick Kerby, Eugene Irby, Scott Bloom, Kathie Maldonado, Kay Armstrong, Patricia White, Joanne Berry, Jim Carver (l-r, standing) Rod McCullough, Murray Chase, Carole Ries, Jim Sohre, Ron Ziegler, Harv Thompson, Dennis Gilmore, Tim Jebesen, John Viars, Jill Patchin, Morrie Enders, Tom Cowley, Frank Peot, Linda Lee, Julie Crawford

The Exhibitors Hall was busy with activity.



A presentation was made to AACT outgoing President Gary Walker by AACT Past President Linda M. Lee thanking him for his leadership during his term as AACT President.



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The first AACT Youth Summit

was a great success. Thanks to all who participated. Look for a report and more information on AACT Youth Programs in the January February 2016 issue of *Spotlight*.

AACTFest 2015 was an enjoyable experience for all.
Great fun and valuable networking with friends - - -



Photos by
Stephen Bird,
David Cockerell
Linda M. Lee



"AACTFest15 has come to an end. Something special happened during this festival. There was an energy and sizzle in the air that I haven't felt in past years. It wasn't just the shows, the venue, or the hotel; it was the people. New friends were made, old acquaintances renewed, and memories created that will last a lifetime.

I can't wait until our paths cross again. What an amazing week we all had."

Chris Serface, AACT Board

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Adjudicators Genevieve Aichele, James Sohre, and John W. Viars gave valuable insight to each production, and educated all who participated in their comments following each performance.



John W. Viars



Genevieve Aichele



James Sohre

Linda M. Lee

Linda M. Lee

Stephen Bird



Lou Vander Have

AACTFest 2015 would not have been successful without the efforts of Festival Coordinators Jill Patchin and Mary Jo DeNolf. They exemplified teamwork and led all those involved with the preparations and execution of AACTFest.



You Are Not Alone!

AACT's National Community Theatre Management Conference 2015

by Chad-Alan Carr

Executive Directors, Artistic Directors, Managing Directors, and board members from community theatres across the country met for two days of roundtable discussions, breakout sessions, and networking in Grand Rapids, Michigan at the AACT National Community Theatre Management Conference. The 30 attendees shared ideas, and inspired one another with discussions on everything from marketing to fundraising, show selection to board and volunteer recruitment, and much more. Norman Ussery, Executive Director of the Waterloo (IA) Community Playhouse and the Black Hawk Children's Theatre, facilitated the conference this year.



Round-table discussion at the Community Theatre Management Conference

The conference was held in the Presidential Gerald R. Ford & Betty Ford Ballroom at the beautiful Amway Grand Plaza. The group assembled was fantastic, and was eager to share.

"This is my first theatre management conference so I didn't really know what to expect, but I am pleasantly surprised. I am getting a lot of new ideas I never thought of. Thanks to hearing other theatres' struggles and successes, I have a new appreciation of our board and our organization."

-Teri Gust, Managing Director of Muskegon Civic Theatre, Muskegon, MI

"I have been doing all aspects of theater for 35 years, and have served on the AACT board for 10 years. I just started a new theater company so I attended the theater management conference. I took ten pages of notes! Wonderful new information to pass along!"

-Donna Fisher, Casper Theatre Company, Casper, WY

"It was an excellent opportunity to be able to sit in a room with a handful of very knowledgeable, creative and savvy theatre folk, and engage in an open forum of discussion in which to focus on specific topics and share in-depth insight. I took away a great deal of positive feedback, wonderful ideas to implement, and made some new friends to boot!"

-Scott Secore, Co-Artistic Director, Operations & Production Manager, Hallie Brown Ford Fine Arts Center, Ada, OK

"This was not only my first conference but the first time our theatre was represented. I really feel like I left with a variety of ideas to share with my volunteers and my board. I think we will be a stronger organization because of my attendance. Also, it is nice to know that I am not alone!"

-Trinity Bird, Executive Director, The Sauk, Jonesville, MI

Personally, I find it thrilling and rejuvenating to meet others that have similar positions at their theatres and work day-to-day with some of the same struggles and successes as I have had in my own theatre experience. This was my second time attending this particular CTM Conference hosted by AACT, and both times I have definitely left with at least one idea that "paid for my trip." The first year I attended

this conference I discovered Senior Citizen Theatre Outreach and The Penguin Project (theatre program for youth with special needs and their peer mentors without special needs). Both programs have been having huge success at my theatre, Gettysburg Community Theatre in downtown Gettysburg, PA, and I highly recommend everyone try them out. At this year's CTM, I discovered new ideas for Volunteer Management, Fundraising, and Marketing that I can't wait to implement. While at the conference and AACTfest 2015 in Grand Rapids last month, I reunited with old friends and made a great many new ones. When it was over, I felt like I was leaving a family reunion and I can't wait for the next one! Just remember, when the roof is leaking, the light bill is high, the seats aren't full, and people in a town that you have been in for a decade or more are still saying they didn't know there was a community theatre in their town...YOU ARE NOT ALONE! Join AACT and all we have to offer. ♦

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What's Trending: Contributions

By Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director

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

Contributions was the subject of a Trends survey distributed in early July. Responses were received from 94 theatres in 34 states. Funding the organization is always a top concern of theatres, especially for board members and staff, but on the bright side, most theatres completing the survey reported contributions have increased or stayed the same in the past couple of years.

Every responding theatre, but one, receives contributions from individuals. Almost 60% have seen increases in those contributions in the past two years with less than 22% seeing decreases. The number of individuals contributing has increased for 55.4% of theatres with 25% reporting a decrease in the number. When asked "what is the most effective way you solicit from individuals?," 42.5% cited annual letters or other direct mail pieces, 23.4% noted personal contacts by various means, 10.6% credited curtain speeches and solicitations in the playbill. Dayton (OH) Theatre Guild sends "Letters, on their giving anniversary date as opposed to one large mailing."

Pairing donation requests or opportunities with season ticket sales or ticket purchases worked best for 8.5% of theatres while 4.25% paired donations with membership renewals, and 5.3% spoke of online donations and ticket sales. The Grove Players (Downers Grove, IL) explained they use "an add-on line on the season ticket order form." The Colonial Players, Inc. in Annapolis, MD is "preparing to launch the ability to accept donations via our website, which may allow us increased visibility to those outside of our subscription base."

Almost 60% have seen increases in individual donations in the past two years

Fundraising events were the most successful for 6.4% of theatres and email solicitations were the tops for 5.3%. Raising funds for a specific project help people decide to give according to 4.26% of theatres. The Tater Patch Players Theater in Jasper, GA shared, "We have been most successful when there is a specific project. This year we paved the parking lot and received many donations – smaller ones, but a good number of donors." A specific project also worked for Kokomo (IN) Civic Theatre, "We did have an increase in individual contributions as we moved through each stage of AACTFest 2015." (Kokomo Civic went all the way to the national festival and won it!) Muskogee (OK) Little Theatre bragged, "One of our most effective and most successful fundraising methods was our "Take a Seat" campaign." It helped raise one million dollars for their capital campaign – in seven months!

Facebook and social media were mentioned by only 2% of theatres, but the Childress (TX) Theatre Company believes in it, "Most recently, it has been through social media and has been most successful." Tip jars in the concessions area had great success in 2% of theatres. Playhouse 2000 in Kerrville, TX noted, "We've had some success with on-line 'crowdsourcing' for specific activities."

Local businesses contribute to over 89% of responding theatres with 50% of them reporting that contributions from local businesses has not changed much in recent years and 32% reporting increases. Underwriting or business sponsorship of shows is utilized by 48.3%

"With operating costs going up and our theatre growing, we are looking into and asking for help in other areas that we have not done in the past."

of the theatres and businesses sponsor specific programing or fundraisers for 35.6%. Also mentioned were businesses matching employee donations, purchasing business memberships, and providing inkind gifts for raffles and giveaways. St. Petersburg (FL) City Theatre has business sponsorship for the entire season. Program advertising is another way businesses provide support to 58.5% of theatres, 50% receive in-kind donations of goods or services, and 38.3% are assisted by businesses that display posters or promote the theatre in other ways. Community Players, Inc. in Beatrice, NE is proud to say, "Playbill advertising is up, we have great support for putting up posters and some places (restaurants) offer show night specials."

Grants from corporations and foundations are won by 73% of theatres completing the survey. Such contributions have held steady for 45.6% and increased for 32.35% of the theatres. Grant writing is handled by different positions in different theatres. Staff writes the grant proposals in 47.4% and board members write them for 41% of the theatres. Other volunteers write them for 9% of the theatres and 2.5% contract with grant writers.

Local arts councils help fund only 43% of theatres, however, 17% of theatres noted their arts council doesn't give grants and 12.3% have no arts council in their community. Of those that do receive arts council funding, 45% report even funding, with 35% getting less and 30% getting more than two years ago. Union County Playmakers in Monroe, NC wrote, "Being a new theatre we do not have a long history of financial support. The NC Grassroots Grant which is distributed by the local Arts Council is our largest donor." Arts councils provide support in other ways. Several theatres mentioned publicity in the arts council's newsletter, website, and emails to members and donors. The arts council sells tickets for Spectral Sisters Productions in Alexandria, LA.

continued on page 30

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Who/what position in your theatre is responsible for fundraising?

We are an all volunteer (except for instructors in our training programs) 60 seat theater with over two years operating expenses in the bank. We seldom need to do fundraising.

Our last significant fundraising project (a few years ago) was for new seats for our theater. We set out to raise \$15,000 and by the time money stopped trickling in we had raised \$22,000.

I am the President of the Board, CEO, AD, and so on. When we need to raise money, I write personal, hand written, letters to potential donors and include a typed project description. I frequently ask for a specific amount based on prior donations from that donor. ("We are looking to raise \$3,000 for this project and I am asking six of our supporters to donate \$500 each.") I have built personal relationships with all of our major donors.

I also write an "after-action report" to the donors showing how their donation has helped solve the problem. In our after-action report for the new seat fundraiser I showed how the money enabled us to move from the mid-level seat to the top-of-the-line seat and enabled us to rebuild the seat risers to add significantly more leg-room.

Unlike many of my peers, I enjoy fund raising. I'm not asking for money, I'm giving our donors the opportunity to be part of the solution to a problem. I totally believe that donors do not want to donate to a problem ("We need your help to pay the electric bill."), they donate to solutions ("By purchasing these new LED light fixtures, we will save \$XXX each year").

Most of our significant donors started out with a small (\$50 to \$250) donation. Donors are like muscles, they need to be exercised but, like muscles, too much exercise is counter-productive.

Even though we do not actively solicit donations, we usually get a significant number of unsolicited donations each year. In my thank you note I tell them what project their donation will be used for (most recently to speed up the retrofit of our old 6" Fresnel light fixtures from the BTL to HPL bulbs).

Doug Bechtel
Actors Theater of Orcas Island, Eastsound, Washington
www.orcasactors.com

Our fundraising strategy is directed by the Executive Director and implemented by a combo of staff (2 development staffers) and Board (three committees).

Staff has the knowledge, understands the techniques (gained from conferences, literature, colleagues, etc.), and the Board knows the community and can open the doors.

Deena Dray, Executive Director
Diamond Head Theatre, Honolulu, Hawaii
www.diamondheadtheatre.com

The Vice President of Finance on our Board of Directors is also the chair of the Fundraising Committee (which includes at least two additional Board members). The Fundraising Committee is responsible for fundraising; the theatre staff is expected to help, but is not the responsible party.

Steven Brewer, Managing/Artistic Director
Old Opera House Theatre Company and Arts Centre, Charles Town, West Virginia
www.oldoperahouse.org

The Executive Director with input and connections from the board of directors.

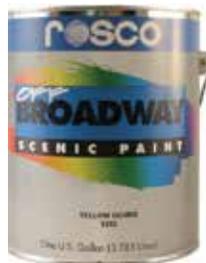
David R. Kilpatrick, Executive Director
La Crosse Community Theatre, La Crosse, Wisconsin
www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org

The Executive Director and Development Chair with participation of the board of directors.

Nick Johnson, Executive Director
Black Hills Community Theatre, Rapid City, South Dakota
www.bhct.org

The Managing Director along with the Development committee and the Board of Directors.

Steven Koehler, Managing Director
Civic Theatre of Greater Lafayette, Lafayette, Indiana
www.lafayetteticivic.org



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Years of Service 2015

The following volunteers reached milestones this year in their service to AACT as Board members, as Committee members, and as State Contacts

25 Years

Mary Britt (Ocala, FL)

20 Years

Stephen Bird (Oklahoma City, OK)

Kathie Maldonado (Alto, NM)

15 Years

Tom Cowley (Edmond, OK)

Morrie Enders (Lincoln, NE)

10 Years

Deborah Allison (Naples, NY)

Kristen Chesak (Kalamazoo, MI)

Stephen Cunetto (Starkville, MS)

Nancy Eppert (Independence, MO)

Donna Fisher (Casper, WY)

Eugene Irby (Artesia, NM)

Elizabeth Nelson (Ketchikan, AK)

Walter Niejadlik (Las Vegas, NV)

5 Years

Amber Rae Bernhardt (Bismarck, ND)

Susanne Caviness (Glenwood, MD)

Shonda Currell (Elk City, OK)

Roger Ellis (Grand Rapids, MI)

Michael Fox (North Salt Lake, UT)

George Green (Coeur d'Alene, ID)

Dawna Kornick (Canal Fulton, OH)

Kathy Pingel (North Port, FL)

Mary Kay Switzer (Banning, CA)

Cheryl Wyant (Sioux Falls, SD)

AACT Supports Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS

Attendees at AACTFest 2015 proved once again that the impact community theatre has on society is not only local in scope, but also national. AACT members manned a booth on behalf of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, shared with guests the importance of that nonprofit organization, and held a drawing of Broadway posters and playbills autographed by the casts. Their efforts raised over \$600, which Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS will use for grants to Emergency Assistance Programs, Food Service and Meal Delivery Programs, Quality of Life Programs, and many other valuable organizations throughout the country.

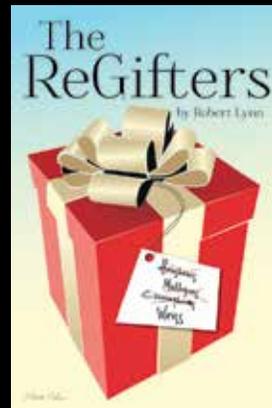
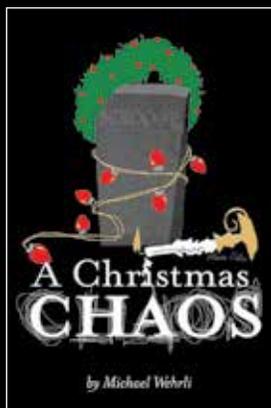
For information on how your theatre can support Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, contact Joe Norton at Norton@broadwaycares.org or by phone at 212-840-0770 ext. 227. ♦



AACT representatives Harv Thompson, Rich Gannon, and Joanne Berry distribute information about Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS at AACTFest 2015.

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Spotlight Award Honors Sue Keenan

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.

Sue Keenan, founding member of the **Village Theatre Guild** (VTG) in Glen Ellyn, IL, was surprised and honored with the prestigious AACT Spotlight Award at VTG's award banquet on June 15th. The annual event is a celebration for another season of producing great theatre in Glen Ellyn, and a celebration of the volunteers who make it all happen! VTG President, Dave Dolnics, warmly welcomed AACT Board Member Rich Gannon, who presented the Spotlight Award to Sue.



Village Theatre Guild President Dave Dolnics (left) and AACT Board Member Rich Gannon present the Spotlight Award to Sue Keenan

Sue Keenan has been hooked on theatre since she was six years old! Sue was “allowed to be” the maid in *Dick Whittington and his Cat* in her neighborhood playgroup. It was a big moment for Sue when she jumped on a stool and shouted her one line, “a mouse, a mouse!”

Sue's history with VTG goes back to 1963, when she and 13 other members of Glen Ellyn's Newcomers Club decided to start their own theatre group, and founded the Village Theatre Guild! During Sue's 52 years with the VTG, she has served as board President seven times, produced ten productions, directed 22 productions, and performed in 25. Sue has also served as stage manager, set designer, usher, and adviser for new recruits. No job is too big or too small. She still climbs the shaky attic stairs in search of costumes and works on the summer cleanup crew!

In the mid-1980's, Sue served on the committee that was instrumental in securing the building Village Theatre Guild now calls home. Currently, Sue is Chair of VTG's Visiting Artists Program. Through this program the Guild recruits well-known theatre professionals who assist and mentor the theatre's production teams as they strive for excellence in theatre!

Regarding her long time service to community theatre, Sue Keenan remarked, “I just feel blessed to be able to do something that I love for all these years, and still feel so proud to be a member of Village Theatre Guild.” ♦

What's Trending *continued from page 26*

Government funding is awarded to 46.6% of theatres reporting with 25% receiving city support and 25% receiving grants from their states. Counties lend support to about 6.4% and a little over 4% of the theatres are the recipients of NEA grants. About 71% of governmental funding is for operations, with the rest for specific programs. The change in governmental funding is slightly up: 39% increased, 31.7% stayed the same, and 29% decreased. The Auburn (AL) Area Community Theatre has inkind support, “City provides no cash funding, but waives facility rental for performances.”

Theatres are moving forward in the improved economy and looking for more sources of contributions. In Pullman, WA the Regional Theatre of the Palouse is finding success and a greater need to reach out, “With operating costs going up and our theater growing, we are looking into and asking for help in other areas that we have not done in the past, such as, grants, government support and corporations.” ♦

Next up in “What's Trending” is budget size and sources of theatre revenue. Check it out in the Nov-Dec issue of *Spotlight*.

To participate in “Trending” surveys, be sure your theatre contact's email is in the AACT database. Check your record online or contact the AACT office.

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Bloomington Playwrights Project
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The Reva Shiner Comedy Award presents an unpublished full-length comedy with a cash prize of \$1,000, a full production as part of the Bloomington Playwrights Project's Mainstage season, along with travel reimbursement.

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"Full-length" plays will have a complete running time of between 1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes.

Deadline: October 31, 2015

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See the website for more details:
newplays.org/

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Is Your Theatre Insurance in Jeopardy?

Until 2004 the AACT Insurance Program was handled by Dan Castle and his insurance agency. Mr. Castle chose to sever relations with AACT, but many theatres continued their coverage through his firm. AACT has learned those theatres might actually not have coverage, thus this notice.

Recently, the insurance licenses for Dan Castle and his insurance agency, the Mears Insurance Agency, were summarily suspended by the Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services. Mr. Castle and his agency marketed insurance through the "National Community Theatre Coalition," which he formed in 2004 after his former agency, Ponta, Castle & Ingram, severed its relationship with AACT. The suspensions were the result of several complaints from theatres that had paid insurance premiums for policies that were never placed, or policies that were canceled by the insurers for non-payment of premium by the agency. The agency was also placing coverage with companies it was not licensed to do business with.

It is important to note that neither Dan Castle nor the Mears Insurance Agency have been affiliated with AACT in any way since 2004, and have never been affiliated with AACT's endorsed insurance provider, USI. Theatres who conducted business with Mr. Castle and the Mears Agency should contact their insurance companies directly to see if their coverage is still in effect.

AACT member theatres that need contact information for their insurance companies or that wish to learn more about the AACT Insurance Program can receive assistance by contacting USI at 800-749-5646. ♦

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Who's Making Things Happen?

by Twink Lynch

Americans tend to be very ambivalent about power and the people perceived to have it. This is probably rooted in our ancestors' experiences with despotic/tyrannical power and the often ruthless exploitation they fled to America to escape.

But power in and of itself implies no such ruthless exploitation. One definition I like is "Power is the ability to make things happen." Nothing ominous in that, is there?

It has been said that power is more important in a democracy than in an autocracy because there are more viewpoints to accommodate. Maybe that's why we often have such difficulty with power in community theatre. We perceive the person with the power is not accommodating all the points of view present among our theatre's "stake-holders." It thus appears the person wielding the power is making things happen only to benefit him/herself.

Do we really have people like that in our theatres? Unfortunately, we do. But the reality is, without someone wielding power in our theatres, we cannot survive. So we need to try to understand power and make it work for us.

Earlier we talked briefly about motivation theory and how motivation is what drives all human behavior and is intrinsic to each person. No one can "motivate" anyone else to do anything. We can only try to establish conditions under which people feel motivated, due to their own needs, to help us do what we need to get done.

David McClelland visualizes motivation as a big vat of energy. There are three valves that release the energy needed for behavior: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. They are not totally exclusive, but in all human beings one need tends to be dominant at any given time.

According to McClelland, characteristics of the need for achievement are:

- the person is concerned with excellence and wants to achieve his or her personal best;
- the person sets moderate goals, and takes calculated risks;
- the person likes to take personal responsibility for finding solutions to problems;
- the person has desire to achieve unique accomplishments;
- the person is restless and innovative;
- the person takes pleasure in striving; and
- the person wants concrete feedback.

The affiliation-motivated person is:

- concerned with being liked and accepted;
- needs warm and friendly relationships and interactions; and
- is concerned about being separated from others — definitely not a loner!

Achievers spend time thinking about:

- doing their job better;
- accomplishing something unusual or important;
- goals and how to attain them;
- obstacles and how to overcome them; and
- advancing their career.

Affiliators spend time thinking about:

- wanting to be liked and how to achieve this;
- consoling or helping people;
- developing warm and friendly relationships (they keep Hallmark in business!) and;
- tuning in to the feelings of others and themselves.

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There's not a word in either of those descriptions about "making things happen." While it is true achievers get things done, their focus tends to be on their personal accomplishments more than on the group. They are not people who find it easy to say "I don't care who gets the credit," and they tend to prefer to do things themselves on their own time rather than teach others and/or bring others along in the process. (This is not a "bad" thing – it just is.)

While we can't possibly run a community theatre without affiliators and achievers – they are our doers – we also cannot run one without the power people who are our leaders. McClelland has done a huge favor for us. His research was able to distinguish between negative/personal power and positive/social power needs and behaviors. Negative/personal power is indeed autocratic, an "I win-you lose" experience. The autocrat makes the group dependent and submissive. She exerts personal dominance (by manipulation or intimidation) over people and tends to treat people like "pawns" rather than "origins."

Social/positive power people, on the other hand, create "win-win" experiences. They exercise power for the benefit of others to attain group goals. They charismatically inspire others to act. They create confidence in others and mentor them. What turns them on is when the group achieves its goal or when anyone under their influence becomes more skilled or self-confident or successful. They are definitely the people who can say, "It doesn't matter who gets the credit." They make others feel like "origins," not "pawns."

The point is that we have people trying to meet all kinds of needs in our theatres, and we'd better be consciously recruiting some social/positive power people, along with our devoted affiliators

and hard working achievers, so we will have the leaders we need "to make things happen."

As for the negative power people who may have joined our theatres and Boards before we realized what they were up to, for the long term good of our theatres we need to deal with them. This will no doubt lead to some open conflict, which we will talk about next. ♦

Additional reading: Max DePree's *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), and Warren Bennis's *Why Leaders Can't Lead* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989). Available from the AACT Bookstore (aact.org/bookstore)

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*, available at aact.org/store.

Reprinted from *Boards in the Spotlight* (page 57). Originally appeared in *Spotlight March 1996*.



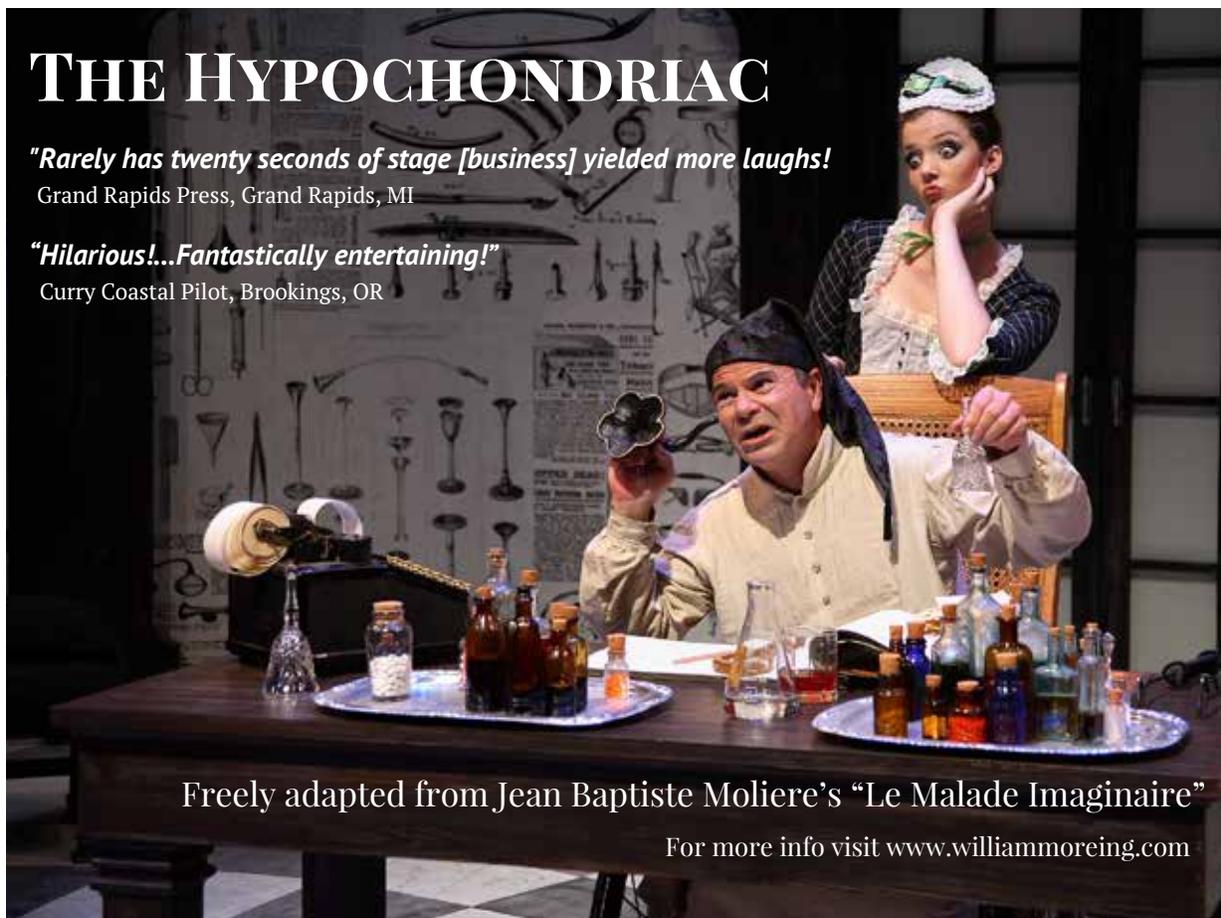
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New Roles

Kalamazoo, MI — **The Kalamazoo Civic Theatre** has named **Todd Espeland** as the theatre's new Artistic Director. Todd is the former Artistic Director of Commedia Zuppa, which toured both nationally and internationally. While in Las Vegas, NV he served as a clown consultant on Cirque du Soleil's show *Zumanity*, working alongside lead Cirque clown Shannan Calcutt. He earned a bachelor's degree in theatre and a master's of fine arts in directing from the University of Nevada Las Vegas. In addition he studied at Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre in Blue Lake, California, and is a specialist in mask and movement actor training. He assumed his new position in June 2015.

Grand Rapids, MI - **Grand Rapids Civic Theatre** announces the appointment of **Allyson Paris** as Associate Director, succeeding Penelope Notter who retired after a 26-year career with the theatre. Allyson has taught classes at Civic Theatre and has served as guest director for the Traveling Troupe, an outreach program. She holds a BA in theatre performance from Bradley University, and an MFA in Asian Theatre/Directing from the University of Hawaii-Manoa. She began her new position with Grand Rapids Civic Theatre on July 1, 2015.

Manchester, NH - **The Little Theatre of Manchester at Cheney Hall** has hired **Dwayne Harris** as Executive Director, replacing Joyce Hodgson, who stepped down in April to join the Hartford Symphony Orchestra as corporate and foundation relations manager. Dwayne received a BA degree from Midwestern State University and earned an MBA from the University of Connecticut. He has also worked for the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts and the Hartford Stage Company. His new duties began in May 2015.

Rapid City, SD - **Justin Speck** has been hired as the Artistic Director for the **Black Hills Community Theatre**. Justin, who began his new position in June 2015, served for one year as the theatre's Interim

Artistic Director, and has been affiliated with the theatre for more than 20 years. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota, a master's degree in directing from the Chicago College of Performing Arts in Roosevelt, and a secondary education certificate from Black Hills State University. He teaches theatre at Central High School and will continue working for the school while serving as artistic director for Black Hills Community Theatre. ♦

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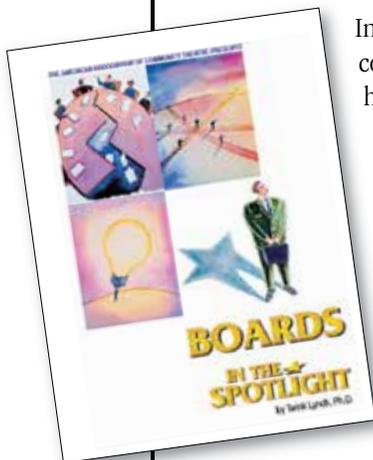
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Sept 11-13	Colorado Community Theatre Coalition Colorado Theatre Festival 2015	CO Denver	303-674-5037 cctcfestival.com
Sept 12	New Hampshire Community Theatre Association New Hampshire State Festival 2015	NH Rochester	603-801-4473 facebook.com/groups/ 1551396785109646/
Sept 25	Community Theatre Association of Michigan Fall Conference	MI Cadillac	989-463-1252 communitytheatre.org
Sept 25-Oct 10	AACT NewPlayFest <i>Lighthouse</i> by William Baer at Windsor Community Playhouse	CO Windsor	970-674-1790 windsorplayhouse.org
October 9-11	Installation Management Command - Europe Region Region X Conference	Kaiserslautern, Germany	011-49-631-411-6252 facebook.com/groups/ 30984348548/
Oct 14-18	Georgia Theatre Conference Georgia Community Theatre Festival	GA Gainesville	229-985-8753 georgiatheatreweb.wix.com/ gtc-website
Oct 22-25	Tennessee Theatre Association 48th Annual Conference	TN Maryville	865-660-1177 tennesseetheatreassociation.weebly.com/
Oct 22-25	Virginia Theatre Association Virginia State Festival 2015	VA Norfolk	434-845-7529 vtasite.org
Oct 23-25	Alabama Conference of Theatre State Community Theatre Festival	AL Guntersville	205-223-6659 alabamaconferenceoftheatre. zeekeeinteractive.com

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



Artie's Advocacy Tip

Quotes from local leaders supporting arts in general and your theatre in particular are an important advocacy tool. Consider engaging the leader in a discussion of the arts and then ask permission to use a quote from that discussion.

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