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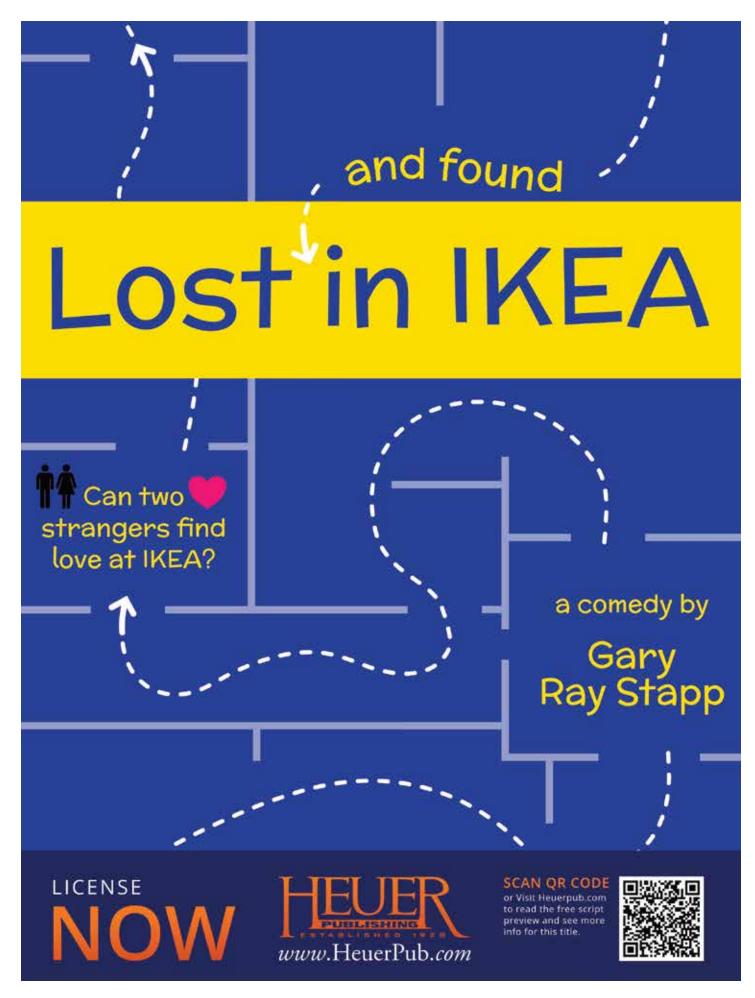
AACTFest 2025 • AACT YouthFest 2025

Demystifying Digital Scenery

The Video Paradox

Top Dog: Bill Berloni's Life with Sandy and Beyond







President's Letter

Kristofer Geddie

AACT President

Dear Friends,

As we close the curtain on AACTFest 2025, I want to extend my deepest thanks to every artist,

volunteer, adjudicator, technician, vendor, sponsor, and audience member who made our time together in Des Moines unforgettable.

From June 22–28, we witnessed the heart and soul of community theatre shine brightly—from breathtaking performances and inspiring workshops to the Community Theatre Management Conference and countless moments of camaraderie in lobbies, hallways, hotel elevators—and yes, bars. AACTFest isn't just a festival—it's a celebration of what binds us together: storytelling, passion, and the power of shared experience.

To the companies who performed—thank you for your bravery, your craft, and your commitment to excellence. Thank you to the YouthFest companies for representing your communities so well. To our adjudicators and workshop leaders—your guidance sharpens our skills and uplifts our artistry. To every attendee who came to support and learn—your presence fuels the spirit of AACT. We thrive because of each other. We don't always agree, but the communion of souls and social discourse strengthens our bonds.

This year's festival also marked important steps for our organization. We welcomed new members, reconnected with old friends, and had crucial conversations about the future of community theatre. From our board meetings to spontaneous late-night reflections, it's

clear that AACT is not only growing—it's evolving in exciting, inclusive, and innovative ways.

As we turn the page to this next issue of *Spotlight*, we carry with us the echoes of standing ovations, the lessons learned, and the friendships formed. And we begin to look ahead—toward the stories still waiting to be told on stages across the country.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable journey. I look forward to serving as President for another year, and I THANK YOU for the privilege! I challenge you all—bring a new member (individual or organization) to AACT, because new voices keep us vibrant and expanding our circle strengthens our future.

I can't wait to see what we create together next.

With gratitude and hope,

Kris

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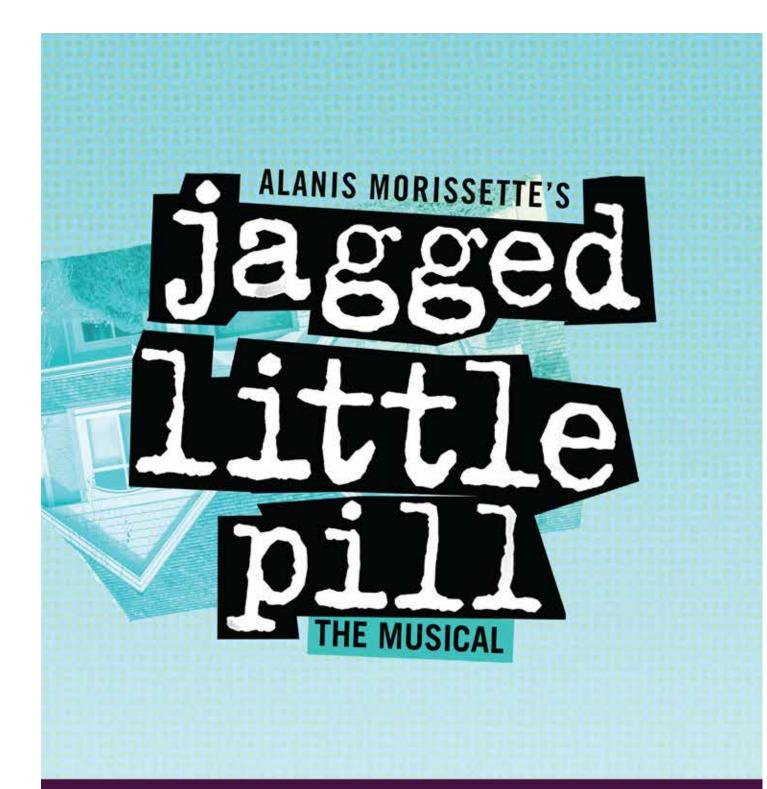
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On the Cover

Jamie Fair (Frank Gulick, L), and Haley Johnson (Emily Gulick, R) in Tone Clusters, Overall Outstanding Production Award winner at AACTFest 2025, presented by Tupelo Community Theatre, Tupelo, Mississippi. Jamie Fair was also recognized for Outstanding Achievement in a Leading Role.

photo by Jonathan Dwight Photography



"Electrifying... visceral and stunning."

- Hollywood Reporter

Thrill your audiences with Alanis Morissette's Jagged Little Pill – the exhilarating new musical, inspired by the themes and raw emotions laid bare in Morissette's seminal album of the same name: concordsho.ws/JaggedLittlePill

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National Directors Conference

November 13-15, 2025 San Antonio, Texas aact.org/ndc

AACT Executive Committee Meeting

November 13, 2025 San Antonio, Texas

Winter Theatre Adventure

February 12-14, 2026 Hale Centre Theatre Salt Lake City, Utah

AACT Winter Board Meetings

February 12-14, 2026 Salt Lake City, Utah

Ongoing Virtual Programming

Member Roundtables

Peer-to-peer discussion and networking opportunities aact.org/roundtables

Virtual Masterclasses

In-depth 75–90 minute explorations of specific skills or

aact.org/virtual-masterclasses

Industry Connections

Industry providers showcase their services in 30-minute presentations

aact.org/industry-connections

Watch for new online programming this Fall



Spotlight

Spotlight is published quarterly 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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AACTFest 2025: Theatre Connects Us All

Michelle Swink

For four unforgettable days in June, the heart of American community theatre beat strong in Des Moines, Iowa. AACTFest 2025, held June 25–28, brought together 12 productions from across the country to celebrate the talent, passion, and power of local theatre. The event was filled with stellar performances, inspiring workshops, laughter-filled afterglows, and countless moments of connection.

While all performances, the VIP Reception, and the National Awards Ceremony were held in the elegant surroundings of Hoyt Sherman Place and its theatre, the Des Moines Marriott Downtown served as the bustling hub for workshops, networking, and social events throughout the week.

Between the historic stage at Hoyt Sherman Place and the welcoming spaces of the Marriott, attendees had all they needed to perform, learn, and connect.

A Showcase of Artistic Excellence

Twelve productions took the national stage, each one bringing something distinct: a bold vision, a fresh voice, a powerful story—or in many cases, all three.

- Tone Clusters, presented by Tupelo Community Theatre
 (Tupelo, Mississippi Region IV), delivered an emotionally
 gripping production that earned Overall Outstanding Production. Jamie Fair was recognized for Outstanding Achievement
 in a Leading Role, and Jonathan W. Martin was honored for
 Outstanding Direction.
- Avinash, by Ebong Theatrix (Bethesda, Maryland Region II), earned a Special Achievement in Choreography for its stylized movement work, standing out as one of the festival's most visually distinctive pieces.
- Love, Loss, and What I Wore, performed by Verona Area Community Theater (Verona, Wisconsin – Region III), received Outstanding Ensemble Performance and was also named a nominee for Overall Outstanding Production.

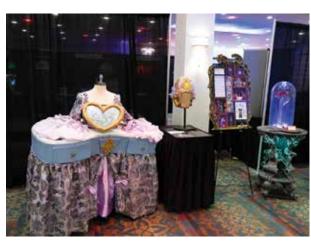
- Forever Plaid, from Absolute Theatre (Rochester, Minnesota Region V) charmed audiences with its tight harmonies and lighthearted spirit. Steffanie Stafford received Special Recognition in Vocal Direction, and Mark Hansen was awarded for Outstanding Sound Design.
- Time Stands Still, presented by Quannapowitt Players (Reading, Massachusetts Region I), garnered multiple honors, including Outstanding Set Design for Ruth Neeman, Outstanding Supporting Role for Jim Barton, and a special backstage commendation for Mike McTeague for his efforts during a challenging load-out. The production was also among the four Overall Outstanding Production nominees.
- Happy Hour at Pink Place, performed by Highlands
 Lakeside Theatre (Sebring, Florida Region IV), delivered laughter and poignancy in equal measure. Jennifer Westergom (Drew) and Margaret Macbeth (Alice) were recognized for Outstanding Achievement in Featured and Supporting Roles, respectively.
- Silent Sky, by Stagecrafters (Auburn Hills, Michigan Region III) stunned with its beauty and intelligence, earning Outstanding Costume Design for Rhonda Hendrickson.
- Tuesdays with Morrie, presented by Baytown Little Theater (Baytown, Texas Region VI), moved audiences deeply. It earned two People's Choice Awards: Favorite Show and Favorite Performer (Jim Wadzinski as Morrie). The company also received a Backstage Award for excellence in collaboration and communication under pressure, including the coveted Spike Tape Ball.
- Men on Boats, performed by Des Moines Community Playhouse (Des Moines, Iowa Region V), celebrated absurdity and adventure. Jessie Worden was honored with Outstanding Featured Role as Bradley, and Lo Stone received recognition for Outstanding Prop Design.
- Natural Shocks, from Sopris Theatre Company (Glenwood Springs, Colorado – Region VII) left a lasting impact. Bostyn Elswick won Outstanding Leading Role for her intense por-



AACT team members Winston Daniels, Michelle Swink, and Karen Matheny



Adjudication session for Time Stands Still



Design Competition display for Beauty and the Beast

trayal of Angela and also took home People's Choice: Favorite Moment for her unforgettable interaction with an uninvited theatre bat. The production was also an Outstanding Production nominee.

- Constellations, by Theatre33 (Bellevue, Washington Region IX) took audiences on a time-bending journey of love, loss, and possibility. Marianna Chebotaryova was honored with Outstanding Lighting Design for her work on the pro-
- The Way of All Fish, presented by Sandy Spring Theatre Group (Gaithersburg, Maryland - Region II), closed the festival with biting dialogue and dark humor. As the final production of the week, it left audiences buzzing and brought down the curtain on AACTFest 2025 with style.

In addition, Ms. Latrice P. Young earned top honors in the AACT-Fest Adult Monologue Competition, adding her voice to the ever-growing community of talented theatre artists recognized during the festival.

Design Competition Celebrates Creativity

AACT's Design Competition spotlighted the innovation, craftsmanship, and visual storytelling happening behind the scenes in community theatres nationwide. This year's honorees included:

- Shubham Rajpal, awarded Overall Outstanding Design for a stunning set design for Dancing at Lughnasa
- Nicholas Amundson, honored for Outstanding Properties Design for Beauty and the Beast
- Angela Lampe, awarded Outstanding Costume Design for Madame de la Bouche for Beauty and the Beast
- Jenny Abeyta, recognized for Outstanding Special Design for her work on Frozen.

These awards recognized not only the artistic results, but the problem-solving, storytelling, and ingenuity that define outstanding design.

Learning, Connecting & Growing

Throughout the week, the Des Moines Marriott Downtown hosted a wide array of workshops and sessions designed for artists, administrators, and technicians alike. Topics included choreography, directing, digital scenery and projections, performing with accents, playwriting, prop making, Shakespeare, adjudication, marketing, and even how to start and run a community theatre.

Whether participants were looking to sharpen artistic skills or strengthen their organization's foundation, there was something valuable for everyone. Attendees praised the practicality, depth, and relevance of the sessions, often citing the workshop lineup as one of the week's biggest highlights. More than just educational, these sessions sparked conversations, inspired new ideas, and fostered a true sense of community among peers.

Exploring the Exhibit Hall

Between sessions, attendees had the chance to explore the Exhibit Hall, featuring a curated mix of vendors, publishers, and service pro-



Exhibit Hall display for The Penguin Project



Tone Clusters performance



Leslie Kimbell delivers keynote



Tuesdays with Morrie performance

All AACTFest photos by Jonathan Dwight Photography



Licensing Essentials workshop with MTI



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viders offering everything from lighting and ticketing solutions to play licensing and more. It was a great place to discover new resources, ask questions, and make meaningful connections.

The Silent Auction, also located in the Exhibit Hall, exceeded its fundraising goals. Proceeds benefit the AACT Endowment, helping sustain the organization and providing travel assistance for companies representing their regions at the national festival.

A Keynote to Remember

Playwright and guest speaker Leslie Kimbell delivered a powerful keynote address that touched on the importance of supporting emerging artists and embracing diversity and inclusion in community theatre. Her warmth, humor, and authenticity left a mark on the crowd, with many attendees citing her remarks as one of their most meaningful moments of the festival. (See story on page 12.)

Afterglows, Auctions, and Applause

Evenings in Des Moines offered more than just downtime... they brought the community together. The week kicked off with a Welcome Reception on Tuesday evening, generously sponsored by Disney Theatrical Group, giving attendees a chance to connect and celebrate the start of the festival.

Each night after performances, Afterglows kept the energy going in true festival fashion. Wednesday featured a lively Broadway Game Night, sponsored by Broadway Licensing and CUR8. On Thursday, the

crowd turned out for Jukebox Musical Karaoke, sponsored by Lively McCabe Entertainment and Music Theatre International (MTI). Friday offered a more relaxed and informal Afterglow, perfect for winding down and reflecting on the week. And on Saturday night, the festival ended on a high note with the AACTFest 2025 Closing Party, once again sponsored by MTI.

Celebrating the Theatre Community

As the festival closed with the National Awards Ceremony, one message stood out: every company left Des Moines with something valuable—new knowledge, new friends, unforgettable memories, and the joy of knowing their work had been seen and celebrated on a national stage.

Yes, awards were given. But more importantly, theatre artists from across the country came together in one place, each bringing their own spark, their own story, and their own slice of community.

Looking Ahead

With AACTFest 2025 now in the rearview, conversations are already beginning about what lies ahead for AACTFest 2027 in Rochester, Minnesota. But one thing is certain: the spirit of Des Moines will live on in rehearsal halls, boardrooms, dressing rooms, and black boxes all over the country. Because the truth is: theatre connects us all.

And AACTFest continues to be the place where those connections are celebrated.



Cast and crew of Constellations



Cast of Tuesdays with Morrie



Exploring the Exhibit Hall



Emily Anderson and Dorinda Toner perform at the Awards Ceremony



Performing Accents workshop with Lori L. Engler



Cast of Love, Loss, and What I Wore



Cast and crew of Tone Clusters





Cast and crew of Natural Shocks



Closing Party

From Waffle House to the World Stage: Playwright Leslie Kimbell's Keynote at AACTFest 25

Quiana Clark-Roland

During AACTFest 25, attendees had the pleasure of hearing a keynote speech by playwright Leslie Kimbell, best known for her *Four Old Broads* comedies. Her journey, "From Waffle House to the World Stage," underscored the transformative power of community theatre in her own life—and the lives of others.

Kimbell's story highlighted how creativity can emerge unexpectedly, proving that underrepresented voices—like those of older actors—deserve center stage. She emphasized community theatre's vital role as a launchpad for careers, a safe space for artistic experimentation, and a source of joy for creators at all levels. Most importantly, she challenged theatres to nurture raw talent, reminding them that the next great artist might already be working there, behind the scenes.

Her keynote was a rallying cry: community theatre isn't just entertainment—it's a catalyst for inclusivity, opportunity, and societal change. Below are the highlights from her presentation (a complete transcript is available at **aact.org/keynote25**).



Leslie Kimbell

Why Your Local Theatre Matters More Than You Think

Kimbell's story resonated deeply, reminding us that Broadway doesn't have a monopoly on great theatre. Some of the most important work happens in church basements and high school auditoriums.

She described the first moment she stepped on stage as an adult—the rush of laughter from the audience, the way it brought back childhood memories of seeing her first play.

"It wasn't just a hobby," she says. "It became a pathway to a new purpose."

And that's the magic of community theatre. It's not about perfection—it's about possibility. That high school kid running lights tonight might be designing Broadway sets in 10 years. The mom playing

Mrs. Potts in *Beauty and the Beast* might discover she has the instincts that would make her an incredible director.

The Elephant in the Green Room

Kimbell's speech took a powerful turn when she addressed the not-so-pretty side of community theatre. After 19 years with her local company—serving on the board, managing its social media, and pouring her heart into the space—she walked away.

Why? Because the board decided her annual "Happy Pride" posts were suddenly "too controversial."

This wasn't some grandstanding on her part—for 14 years, that simple message had quietly told LGBTQ+ community members they were welcome. When it disappeared, people noticed. A stranger even approached Kimbell in a store to ask why the theatre had gone silent.

Her voice broke as she told this story.

"A community theatre is no place for exclusion in any form," she said. "It is for the whole community."

Building Stages Where Everyone Belongs

So what's the way forward? Kimbell offered some hard-won wisdom:

- Stop recycling the same small group.
 Seasoned veterans should mentor, not monopolize, roles.
- 2. Produce new stories.
 - "When was the last time your theatre produced something written in this decade? By someone under 40? From a different cultural perspective?"
- 3. Act on diversity.
 It must be reflected in casting, leadership, and yes—social media. Silence, as Kimbell learned, "speaks volumes."

Curtain Call

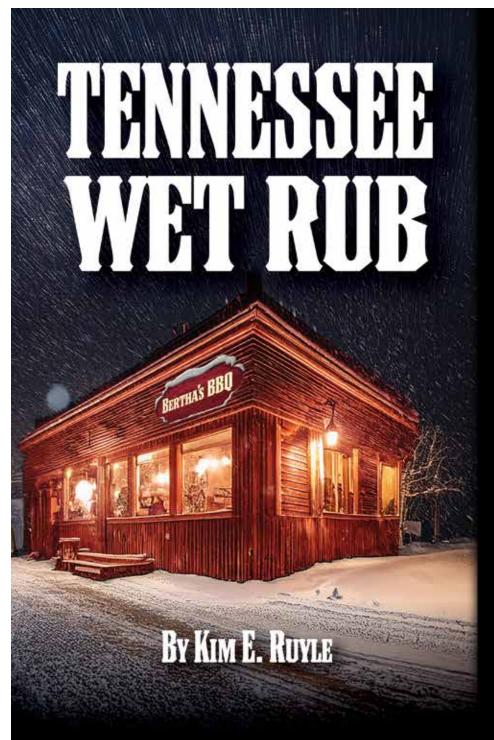
Kimbell believes that community theatre will never compete with Netflix when it comes to special effects or production values. But what it can offer is something streaming services never will—real human connection, the thrill of shared risk, and sometimes, if we're lucky, the chance to discover who we're really meant to be.

As she put it: "When we lead with care and integrity, community theatre becomes more than just a stage—it becomes a force."

So the next time you're near your local theatre, consider stopping in. You might just witness the beginning of someone's Waffle House moment—or maybe even your own.

Leslie Kimbell is a Concord Theatricals playwright, actor, and director. She is the recipient of the 2021 Georgia Theatre Conference Hall of Fame Award and serves as the Theatre Partners Chair for The Del Shores Foundation.

Learn more about Leslie Kimbell at **lesliekimbell.com** or **face-book.com/lesliekimbell**. A complete transcript of her keynote presentation is available at **aact.org/keynote25**.



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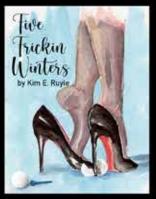


A Crooked French Affair, 6F/4M From Next Stage Press Wickedly funny! A love letter to theatre and people who make it.





Sliding into Seniorhood, 3F/3M From Next Stage Press A charming romantic comedy that springs a stunning conclusion.





Five Frickin Winters, 2F/2M, Mature Audiences From Next Stage Press A witty, complex play about the prickly pitfalls of romance & infidelity.

AACT YouthFest 2025 in Des Moines

Award Winners Announced!

The American Association of Community Theatre hosted Youth-Fest 2025 from June 22-24 at the Des Moines Playhouse in Des Moines, Iowa, just ahead of AACTFest 2025. Youth theatre companies from across the nation gathered for three days of energetic performances, creative workshops, and inspiring connections, all culminating in the presentation of national awards honoring exceptional young talent. See all the winners here: aact.org/youthfest-2025-awards

Monologue Competition

Winner: Indigo Kifer

Finalists included Emily Bergenroth, Ty Drullinger, Stella Hogan, Jack Whitney, and Indigo Kifer. At the YouthFest closing ceremony, Indigo received top honors for her compelling solo performance.

Adjudicator Awards & Recognitions

- Outstanding Dance Performance: "Stay in Your Lane" Dancers – Avinash (Ebong TheatriX)
- Outstanding Achievement in Vocal Harmonies: Cast of Disney's The Little Mermaid JR. (Landmark Community Theatre)
- Outstanding Music Composition: Judah Brown Lost Girl (Clark Youth Theatre)
- Outstanding Performance by a Rising Star: Priscilla Roma as Alice – Runaway Princess (Central Park Players)
- Outstanding Ensemble Work: Dark Road (Northern Starz Center for Performing Arts) and Mac Beth (Civic Youth Theatre of Greater Lafayette)

Outstanding Achievement in Acting

- Avinash (Ebong TheatriX): Jiyon Banerjee, Suhana Tiwari
- Mac Beth (Civic Youth Theatre of Greater Lafayette): Ash Durham (Macbeth), Quinn Findlay (Witch 2)
- The Little Mermaid JR. (Landmark Community Theatre): Teagan Guertin (Chef Louis), Camila Reyes (Sebastian/ Ursula)



Mac Beth performance, Civic Youth Theatre of Lafayette

- Runaway Princess (Central Park Players): Sebastien Navis (Dragon), Eden Navis (Queen)
- Lost Girl (Clark Youth Theatre): Cora Paul (Wendy), Jack Whitney (Slightly)
- Dark Road (Northern Starz): Mia Tanner (Lise), Evelyn Zimpfer (Greta)

Special Awards

Backstage Award

• Civic Youth Theatre of Greater Lafayette & the Cast & Crew of *Mac Beth*

For outstanding organization, efficiency, and communication

Spirit Award

Clark Youth Theatre

For professionalism, flexibility, and dedication in adapting to a
major schedule change

These awards highlight the breadth of talent—from solo performances to ensemble storytelling, musical composition to dance, and standout acting across genres. Congratulations to all the young artists whose passion and artistry made YouthFest 2025 a vibrant celebration of youth theatre!

AACT thanks every participant and the Des Moines Playhouse for hosting this showcase of emerging theatre talent—here's to more magic on stage through YouthFest!

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The "Big Beautiful Bill's" Impact on Charitable Giving

Quiana Clark-Roland

On July 3, the U.S. House passed H.R.1—nicknamed the "Big Beautiful Bill"—a major tax reform package that could have some real ripple effects for nonprofit theatres. Since the bill—signed into law by the president—presents a mix of opportunities and challenges for charitable giving, we've broken down its key provisions to help you understand what it could mean for your organization. Plus, we've included a few hypothetical scenarios to show how these changes could play out in the real world.

Private Foundations

1. Excise Tax on Net Investment Income

- Final Bill: Did not include a House-passed provision to increase the
 excise tax. No change for now, with the potential for this to change in
 the future.
- Hypothetical Impact: A community theatre's endowment relies partly on foundation grants. Had the tax increased, future donations might have dipped. Theatres may now prioritize individual donors to hedge risk.

2. Excess Business Holdings

- Final Bill: Did not include a House-passed provision that would have amended excess business holdings of private foundations.
- Hypothetical Impact: A theatre's founding family donates restaurant shares to their foundation. Stricter rules could have forced divestment, shrinking the foundation's assets and reducing grants to the theatre.

Corporate Giving

1.1% Floor on Charitable Deductions

- Final Bill: Corporations must donate at least 1% of taxable income to qualify for deductions (unchanged 10% cap). Excess contributions can carry forward five years.
- Estimated Cost: \$16.6 billion revenue over 10 years.
- Philanthropy Impact: Independent Sector estimates a \$4.5 billion annual drop in corporate giving.
- **Hypothetical Impact:** A corporate sponsor donating 0.8% of income loses its deduction and cuts \$50,000 in annual support to their local theatre

Individual Giving

1. Changes for Itemizers

- Final Bill:
 - Deductions capped at \$0.35 per dollar (down from \$0.37 for top earners).
 - 0.5% floor: Only donations exceeding 0.5% of AGI are deductible.
 - o 60% AGI limit for cash gifts made permanent.
- Hypothetical Impact: A donor reduces their \$100,000 gift to \$90,000 due to lower tax benefits, creating a shortfall for a theatre's new-play fund.

2. Deduction for Nonitemizers

- Final Bill: Permanent \$1,000 deduction (\$2,000 for joint filers) for nonitemizers, excluding donor-advised funds.
- Hypothetical Impact: A middle-class patron boosts annual giving from \$500 to \$1,500, funding free student matinees.

3. Standard Deduction Increase

 Final Bill: Raises standard deduction to \$15,750 (\$31,500 for joint filers) in 2025, adjusted for inflation. This means fewer taxpayers will itemize deductions, since itemizing only makes sense if deductible expenses (like charitable gifts, mortgage interest, etc.) exceed the standard deduction. • Hypothetical Impact: A donor who no longer itemizes stops their \$5,000 annual gift to their local theatre or charity.

4. Scholarship-Granting Organizations

- Final Bill: \$1,700 tax credit for donations only to K-12 scholarship charities. This would create a charitable credit for one specific type of charitable organization, rather than to all section 501(c)(3) organizations
- Hypothetical Impact: A theatre's education program may lose donors to scholarship-focused charities, shrinking its budget.

Nonprofit Operations

1. Johnson Amendment: Recission of tax-exempt status for nonprofits supporting terrorism.

• Final Bill: There were no changes to political intervention by 501(c) (3) charitable organizations, part of the 2017 tax code overhaul.

2. Excess Executive Compensation

- Final Bill: 21% excise tax on compensation over \$1 million for all nonprofit employees.
- Hypothetical Impact: A theatre or arts organization paying its CEO \$1.2 million faces a \$42,000 tax. To offset costs, it may cut programs or reduce CEO's pay.

3. Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT) Changes:

Final Bill: Tax-exempt organizations (EOs) must now calculate
Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT) separately for each unrelated
trade or business activity (rather than aggregating income and losses
across all activities). Losses from one activity cannot offset income
from another. The only allowable offset is the carryforward/carryback
of losses within the same business activity across different tax years.

Potential Use/Impact:

- Ticket sales & performances (related to tax-exempt purpose) not subject to UBIT
- Concessions & bar sales (unrelated business activity) subject to UBIT
- Rental income from leasing theatre space to outside groups (unrelated business activity) – subject to UBIT
- o Merchandise sales (t-shirts, mugs, etc.) subject to UBIT

University Endowments

1. Excise Tax Adjustments

- Final Bill: Sliding-scale taxes (1.4%–8%) on endowments exceeding \$500,000 per student.
- Hypothetical Impact: A university slashes subsidies to its affiliated theatre, due to new taxes, forcing the theatre to raise ticket prices or seek private donations.

Wrapping Up

While some parts of the new law—like the nonitemizer deductions—could give theatres a helpful boost, other parts—such as corporate floors and executive taxes—create hurdles. Diversifying funding sources and keeping a close eye on how these changes roll out will help organizations stay the course. For more information, visit the resources listed below.

Sources: Joint Committee on Taxation [https://www.jct.gov], Council on Foundations [https://cof.org], National Council of Nonprofits [https://www.councilofnonprofits.org], Independent Sector [https://independentsector.org].

The Video Paradox **Inspiration or Imitation?**

Spotlight Editorial Team member Katrina Ploof sat down with colleagues recently to discuss the hot topic of pirated and licensed Broadway videos and their controversial use in the creative process in our theatres. She was joined by Mary Doveton, former Executive Director of Theatre Lawrence, Kansas; Benny Sato Ambush, Artistic Director of Venice Theatre, Florida; and musical director and composer Philip King.

Katrina: Thank you so much for joining me via Zoom to talk about something that's been on my mind for a while. This topic came up in a group chat several months ago, after an actor shared a story with me about being in a rehearsal for a production where the director sat at a table with a pirated video of the Broadway production of the show, and simply copied the blocking and interpretation.

Benny: So, they didn't even hide it.

Katrina: Nope.

Mary: My goodness.

Katrina: I guess it just got me thinking that there are a lot of us, most of us, out there who work day and night *not* to steal or copy other artists' work. And that the proliferation of pirated or licensed Broadway videos has created an environment where that happens all the time. And it seems like there are some folks who simply look the other way.

Benny: There was a lawsuit several years ago against a theatre in Florida for that same thing. It was a real bruhaha. But the advantage there, because it was a professional theatre, was that the playwright and the director and choreographer had unions protecting their work, and the unions got involved. But what do you do if you don't have a union? Who is going to fight that battle for you—of someone copying your intellectual property?

Katrina: So, unions can step in and protect work on the professional level. But who does that at the community theatre level?

Phil: And it's not just staging, it's everything.

Katrina: Every decision that gets made in a production is really a collaborative one, right? That's what we are talking about protecting when we talk about the way a play looks and feels and sounds. We are talking about the collaborative decisions of countless people, not just the playwright's words or the composer's melodies.

Benny: Yes, and when you pirate something off a video you are pirating the work of a group of people, as well as the director and the playwright.

Katrina: Mary, in your work at Theatre Lawrence, how often do you feel you need to strongly guide the artists you work with to explore their own vision, versus solely relying on what was done in New York or London?

Mary: Where I have noticed the biggest change in the last few years is with actors who want to imitate and duplicate performances they see on these videos. As leaders, we have to guide them and say to them, "You can't do that thing just because you saw someone else do it. You have to root your choice in something here."

Katrina: Phil, I'm watching your head go up and down.

Phil: I literally... [for] the show I'm working on right now, a couple of the actors are doing that exact same thing, and I perhaps got a little short with them. "Don't worry about what they did on Broadway!"

Mary: Yes, yes.

Katrina: So how do we, as leaders, give artists an understanding and engender respect for the provenance of the work that they are getting to explore?

Phil: Well, the thing is you have to start with—it's about the authors, you

know? I work with actors all the time who don't even know who wrote the play they are in, or the composer and lyricist. And we have to give them that knowledge and appreciation. That's the baseline from which everything begins. This has become a large societal issue in our industry. Pandora's box has been opened, unfortunately.

Benny: I try upfront to encourage the company to not watch any videos of the production they are working on. You can't guarantee that they won't. They'll likely do it anyway. But I do encourage them, "don't do that." As for myself, I don't watch other productions. I don't want to be influenced.

Mary: There was a show, on HGTV I think, where participants would visit, I think it was called, "The Inspiration Room."

Katrina: Like for designers?

Mary: Yes. And they would visit this room and use it to inspire their work. But they didn't copy it.

continued on page 18 >



Benny: Fair.

Mary: I think we are at that point that no matter what we say, people are going to look at other productions, at the Broadway production. So, I think our challenge is to make that technology work for us, to lead the company to a deeper understanding of the story, rather than just copying.

Phil: I am going to shift a little bit, because one of the interesting things I run into, from my part of the creative process, is directors who want to make cuts to the licensed material in order to match the Broadway version that they've seen on the video. Because often what is actually licensed is the national tour version or the London version. And that's not the original Broadway material. It can be really difficult to explain to someone that the version of the show they are required to do is *not* the one on the video.

Benny: If you want changes, you are required to ask permission. They often say no, and nowadays they check to see if productions are presented according to the licensing contract. The licensing companies are getting stricter about this every year, and they have a right to be.

Katrina: They are doing their job, protecting the original creators of the work. And trying to defend this to someone can be hard. Their answer often is, "No one will ever know, who cares, it's just us, we're a community theatre."



Phil: And where's the line? If you are comfortable, ethically, with stealing someone else's creative property, how far are you willing to go?

Benny: Yes. Use it and pass the work off as your own?

Mary: And something else—again, from a purely practical standpoint—is that no matter how hard you try, you will *never* be able to duplicate what is on the video, no matter what you do.

Benny: Why would you even try to imitate Patti LuPone? I mean, come on!

Phil: So, I think the question you were asking earlier, Katrina, is what is the difference between inspiration and copying? And how do you find that for yourself as an artist?

Benny: When you are stealing something, you know it.

Mary: You know.

Katrina: You 100% know when you are stealing someone else's work. Okay, so here's the big question: as leaders, how do we articulate to our production teams and our actors that our expectation is that they will begin at the beginning and not rely on someone else's decisions? It's the integrity piece, really. It's about the integrity of the work.

Phil: I think there probably is a way to talk about it while you're appealing to the ego, you know? Which is, "I want *your* vision and *your* concept and *your* reading of this story. I'm not interested in you reproducing another production. I want to see *your* work."

Mary: I think I go in pretty strong, helping to channel things a little bit. I do exercise some control from the beginning which, maybe, that's me being overbearing...

Benny: Mary, they call that directing. Help actors build it from the inside

Mary: Be an artist.

Benny: Talk. Challenge yourself. Be a company of imaginative creative beings. Trust your intelligence. It's scary. Do it anyway.

Phil: I'm also fond of saying, "maybe Broadway didn't get it right." Put some fresh eyes on this work.

Katrina: Oh, I like that! There's a lot to think about here, and hopefully our discussion will prompt discussions throughout our theatre community. You guys are the best. Keep up the good fight.

Benny: Take care.

Mary: Thanks so much.

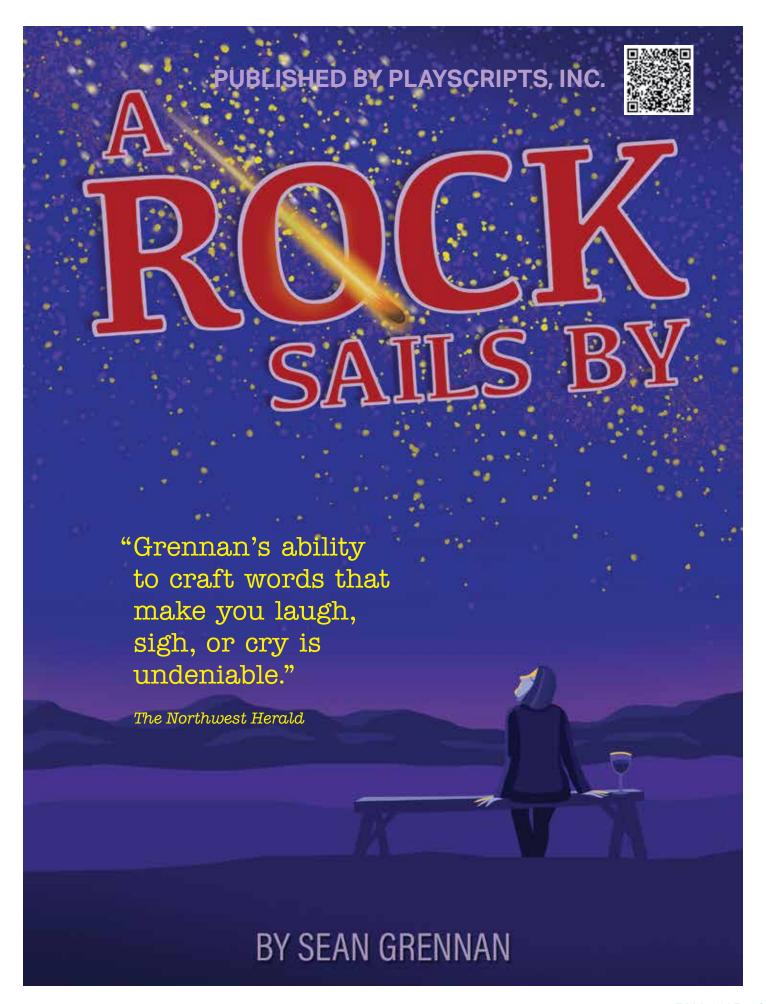
Phil: It was a pleasure.

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us a limited amount of time to accept these discounted renewals each year, and they will be available on our website until the end of September, 2025. Don't delay on this member benefit and our Special Bundle Offer!





The AACT Advantage

Lou Ursone

Lindsey Murphy Says Yes to the AACT Advantage

As directors, designers, producers, and actors working to get a show up and running, we're all anxious to "say yes to the dress" and move on. Meanwhile, some of our team members are working just as hard to get others to say yes—when it comes to funding asks. One person who knows both sides of the "yes" equation is Lindsey Murphy, Development Manager at TheaterWorks in Peoria, Arizona.



Lindsey has enjoyed a bit of a homecoming at the theatre where she and her sister once performed and took classes as children. After returning to Phoenix and TheaterWorks as an actress four years ago, she stepped into her current role as Development Manager this January. Before that, her only development experience was as a college cold-caller— "when I experienced the most brutal

side of fundraising," she said. (If Lindsey looks familiar, it might be because you saw her on TLC's spin-off, Say Yes to the Dress: America.)

Prior to attending AACTFest 2025, Lindsey admitted, "I only saw the AACT logo on our building every single time I walked in the door." She hadn't been aware of the **webinars and roundtables** hosted by AACT year-round and was excited to discover the learning opportunities available on the AACT website.

AACTFest turned out to be an eye-opener for Lindsey, who participated in both the Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC) and a number of AACTFest workshops.

"I've been to a lot of different conferences for various jobs, so I went without great expectations," she said. "It actually surprised me how much perspective I gained for my job in just a few days. Through the workshops and individual conversations, I found great validation in what we do and how we do it. We always think we have unique problems, but it doesn't matter the size or shape of the organization—it's all the same, just on a different scale. AACTFest really put that into perspective for me, and our team was so inspired by the people we met, we realized that we're part of something so much bigger than just our theatre."

She is especially grateful that, through AACT, "we now have this huge network of people we can rely on. We don't have to depend on a Google search to solve problems—we can connect with people across the country," and most importantly, her experience at CTMC and AACTFest has given her more confidence in her new role, because "so much of what I saw and heard confirmed that what we're doing is right."

What would she say to someone who isn't yet an AACT member? "If you work in a theatre organization and want to improve in any capacity, why not get involved? We're all here to gain the skills to do better."

So, what's even more important than saying yes to the dress? Saying yes to AACT!

Davida D. Williams

"If you want help with your vision. If you need some discounts. But most importantly, if you want a community of people to celebrate you, to understand you, to 'get it'—that is what AACT provides," said Davida D. Williams, Artistic Producer at Iowa Stage Theatre Company in Des Moines.



Davida's first exposure to AACT was the Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC), preceding AACTFest 2025 in Des Moines. She had seen posts on Facebook about the conference, and a potential scholarship opportunity to attend, and decided to go for it.

"My personality is such that I don't want to be talked at, so I wasn't sure if a conference was right for me," she said. But CTMC turned

out to be something very different—and very rewarding.

"It was an extraordinary experience. I could have used more time than the three days. I went into it really just wanting more information about the expectations of my job," she said. "For the two years I've been in my job, that's something I've struggled with—am I doing at least what's expected? And come to find out, I am," she added with a laugh. "It boosted my confidence over the moon."



She praised how the conference sessions were facilitated: "The vibe in the room, the vibe of equality in the room—people with a budget of \$20K to someone with a budget of \$6M—it fed me. It made me feel so much more secure in what I'm doing and where I'm heading."

After the conference, she felt energized. "I have this great group of people as a resource now, for when I feel like, 'I think this should be going a different way,' I've got people who can tell me, 'That's about right,' or, 'Oh, you should probably try this."

She is grateful for finding that community, explaining that "You can feel so isolated when you're in the middle of whatever your situation is, so it's just amazing to hear people who have gone through that exact same situation. We were all just there to learn and to figure things out and take back ideas to make our organizations that much better."

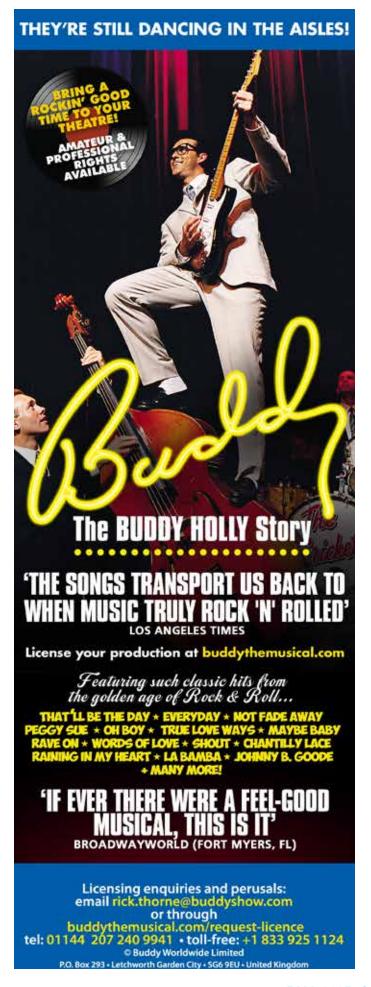
Being at CTMC helped her define her next steps, as well.

"It helped me set goals by listening to those people with all the different budget sizes," she said. "My goals now seem much more reachable, sustainable—they make more sense."

A Des Moines native, Davida has over 30 years of acting experience, as well as a tenacious passion for storytelling and a deep aspiration to bring about positive change through theatre. She is committed to creating an even bigger spotlight on the local theatre community, while maintaining a strong focus on diversity, inclusivity, and representation—both on and off stage.

Davida's experience at CTMC has solidified her belief in the value of professional development. And to anyone wondering why they should join AACT, Davida says, simply, "It is a most necessary resource."





Demystifying Digital Scenery, Step by Step

Stephen Peithman

Digital projections make use of images, animations or video to create backdrops and visual effects in theatrical productions. Their increasing use is tied to several key advantages:

- Versatility: Scenic projections can display a wide range of images, from static backdrops to animated sequences, creating diverse and engaging visual experiences.
- Cost-effectiveness: For many theatres, especially smaller venues, projections are more affordable than building and painting elaborate physical sets.
- Time-saving: Digital scenery can significantly reduce set construction time and allow for faster scene changes.
- Enhanced storytelling: Projections can establish specific locations and moods, enhancing the narrative of a play or musical.
- Special effects: Projections can simulate natural elements like rain, snow, or fire, and create fantastical or magical effects.
- Integration with other stage elements: Projections can work in conjunction with physical sets, props, and lighting to create a cohesive, visually-enhanced production.

Projections are especially useful in venues where hanging drops are impractical, or traditional set changes are limited. On any stage, they help establish a location or time period, or when "magic" is called for.

HELPR SHARESPEAR

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Melissa Kratish, of Broadway Media—which offers scenic projection packages and digital backdrops—is also a board member for a community theatre company in central Florida. She has seen, firsthand, how even small theatres are using the new technology.

"Our projections for *Singin'* in the Rain were piloted at a community theatre production in 2022," she explains. "They included many custom video elements. Projected rain was used because the theatre didn't allow water on stage. When paired with sound effects, the audience thought it was real."

She also notes that audiences are familiar with the original films or Broadway versions of big-name shows and often expect similar production values in their local theatre.

The Long and Short of It

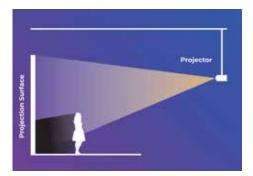
Three elements are required to run digital scenery:

- 1. A projector
- 2. A computer with playback software like QLab or Watchout. (PowerPoint is cost-effective but not designed for high-resolution animation.) QLab and Watchout can be costly. Stage Player from Broadway Media comes pre-cued with their show packages.
- 3. A projection surface, such as:
 - · Cyclorama (cyc)
 - Flats
 - · Light-colored surfaces
 - LED Walls (prevalent in professional venues, but expensive).

There are three basic configurations for a stage projector, depending on what works best in a particular venue.

Long-Throw Front Projection

While this is the most common installation, a projector at the back of the house will throw the image on the actors as well, produce shadows, and wash out stage lighting. That said, it can be useful in a scene where projecting on the actors is part of the designer's vision, as with the subway window reflections in the Woodland Opera House production of *Amélie* (see page 42).



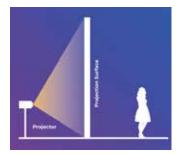
Long-throw front projection

Rear Projection

In this setup, the projector is placed backstage and the image is projected onto the back of a special translucent projection surface. This avoids the shadows that may come with front projection, but it also requires 8-15 feet of dedicated space behind the screen.

Ultra Short-throw Front Projection

This is an increasingly popular method, with the projector rigged directly above the stage to avoid casting shadows. It's often used for backdrops on a cyc, scrim, or backdrops such as rain in *Singin' in the Rain*.





Rear projection

Ultra short-throw front projection

Placing a short-throw projector on the stage floor may be a viable option as well. Kratish cites a production of *The Wizard of Oz* that handled backdrops via a projector enclosed in a black box on the floor, eight feet from the drop. An ultra short-throw lens created a 40 footwide image (see photo at right). For safety, wires were taped down and made a line on the stage that performers knew not to cross.

Throwing Light On the Subject

Projectors

There are three basic configurations:

 Standard-throw lenes have a ratio of either 1:1 (an image will be one foot wide from a projector placed one foot from the projection

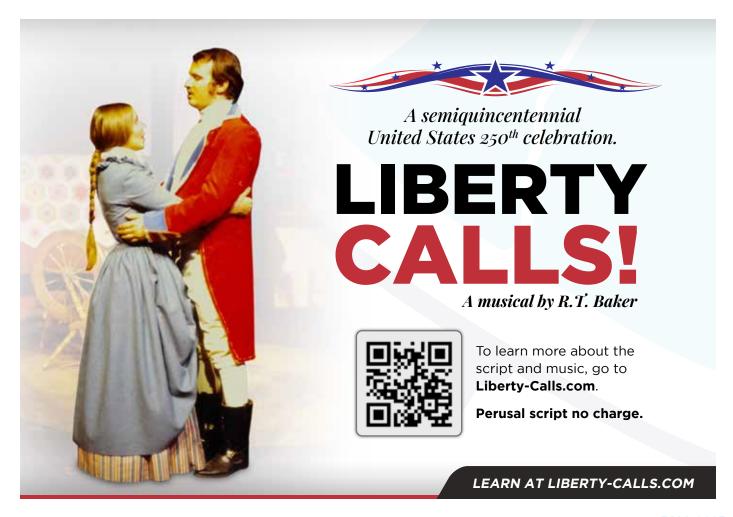


Short-throw front projection from the stage floor for The Wizard of Oz Youth Edition. The projector is hidden by the black box in front of Dorothy. (Horizon West Theater Company, Windermere, Florida)

surface) or 2:1 (producing an image two-feet wide from the same position.)

- Short-throw lenses, with a 0.5:1 throw ratio, can be half as close, projecting a foot-wide image from a projector placed just six inches away from the projection surface.
- Ultra short-throw models do far better, with throw ratios as high as 0.24:1 to 0.35.1.

continued on page 24 >



To determine how far away your projector needs to be to cover a specific area, multiply the throw ratio of the projector by the desired image width. For example, if the projector has a 0.35:1 throw ratio and the desired projected width is 40 feet, the projector should be placed 14 feet from the projection surface: 0.35 (throw ratio) x 40 (feet wide) = 14 feet.

Projectors can be expensive, especially those with ultra-short throws, which start at around \$15,000. Renting a projector is a good option if you're just getting your feet wet, Kratish says, such as those offered by her company [broadwaymedia.com/stage-gear/projectors].

Getting Off on the Right Foot

Digital scenery does not replace the need for a scenic designer—it's simply another tool for the designer, offering three alternatives:

- Integrated Set, combining scenic projections with physical set elements, such as flats.
- 2. **Full Set Replacement**, using only projections.
- Projection Mapping, which might include scenic projections at the rear, plus individual image projections on flats along the side or on stage.

"Be sure to review your projection ideas ahead of time for how it might affect blocking," Kratish advises, "and ensure your lighting designer is collaborating with projection needs. For example, blues, purples, and greens are complementary, while whites and yellows wash out projections."

Looking at the Big Picture

Using AI or Google for images to project is an inexpensive option, but beware of copyright issues, and issues around continuity and contextual accuracy.

Hiring a designer or artist may provide more control, but requires sufficient time for completion, review, and programming.

Broadway Media's digital projections have the advantage of being script-accurate, and approved by licensing entities like MTI, Disney, Broadway Licensing Global, and TRW.

Software Options

Projection playback requires the right software. Common choices include:

- QLab (qlab.app)
- Watchout (dataton.com/watchout)
- Stage Player from Broadway Media (easy to use and tailored for their packages)

PowerPoint and Keynote may work for basic image slides, but they're not equipped for high-res or animated files and may crash during a show.

Final Thoughts

Digital projection scenery offers enhanced visual appeal, increased flexibility, and potential cost savings. It also encourages creativity and experimentation by designers and directors. The best way to discover how to make projections work for your theatre may be to get your hands on the

best projector, screen, laptop, and software that you can afford, and explore the possibilities.



In this production of Mamma Mia!, physical sets were integrated with scenic projections. (Grays Harbor College, Aberdeen, Washington)



A digital backdrop replaces a full set.



Projection mapping allows a single projector to cast different scenic elements on side and rear panels in this production of Matilda. (Green Valley High School, Henderson, Nevada)

We thank Melissa Kratish and Broadway Media for the photos and illustrations used in this article, as well as providing valuable insights into the use of digital scenery in community theatres. [broadwaymedia.com]

(A longer, more detailed version of this article with additional graphics and images is available online at aact.org/projections.)





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Fundraising and Friend-Building An AACTFest Backstory

Lyle Tate, Baytown Little Theater, Baytown, TX – AACT Region VI

"Representing AACT Region VI at AACTFest 2025 will be Baytown Little Theater's *Tuesdays with Morrie*."

When Dennis Yslas, Executive Director of Theatre Network of Texas (TNT) and coordinator of AACT Region VI's Southwest Theatre Conference, made this announcement in Hobbs, New Mexico, earlier this spring, our Baytown Little Theater (BLT) company members were elated. This would be only the second time in BLT's 60+ years that we had been honored to perform at the AACTFest national festival.

When the cheers subsided and the tears of excitement dried, we got down to business and began planning for the AACT experience—a process that would involve many challenges along the way.



Lvle Tate and Iim Wadzinski

Preparing for the Stage

Jim Wadzinski ("Morrie" to my "Mitch") and I knew we wanted to do all we could to prepare ourselves for AACTFest 2025 in Des Moines. We'd been rehearsing and performing our cutting of *Tuesdays with Morrie* since late 2024, and we felt like we had a solid production under our belts. But heading to AACTFest, we knew, would require an entirely new level of preparation.

Taking the excellent comments we received from both our state and regional festival adjudicators, Jim and I felt the need for more than simple rehearsals without audience feedback. Under the leadership of our director, Carrie McRay—along with veteran BLT director, actor, and our sound designer, Kim Martin—we reached out to friends at neighboring theatres to see if they might have openings in their calendars for us to bring *Tuesdays with Morrie* to their spaces and audiences. The responses we received floored us.



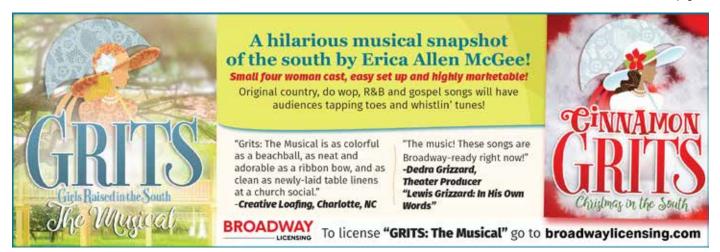
Baytown Little Theater's Tuesdays with Morrie company (I to r): Gary Smith, Kim Martin, Jim Wadzinski, Lyle Tate, Dawn Daily, Frannie Smith, Jimmy Martin, Carrie McRay

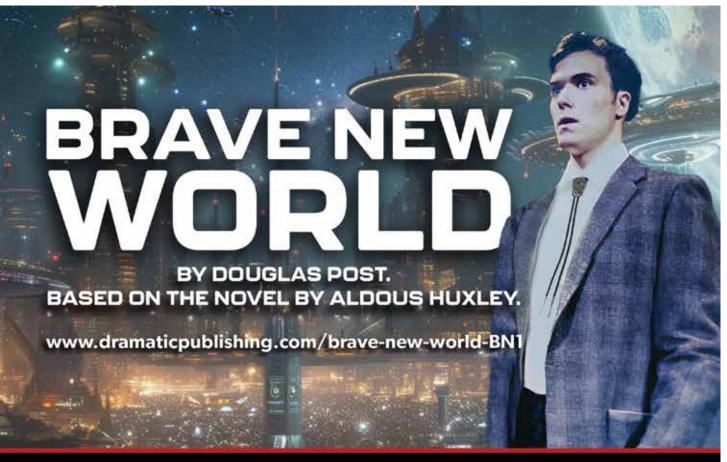
The Tour: A Community Effort

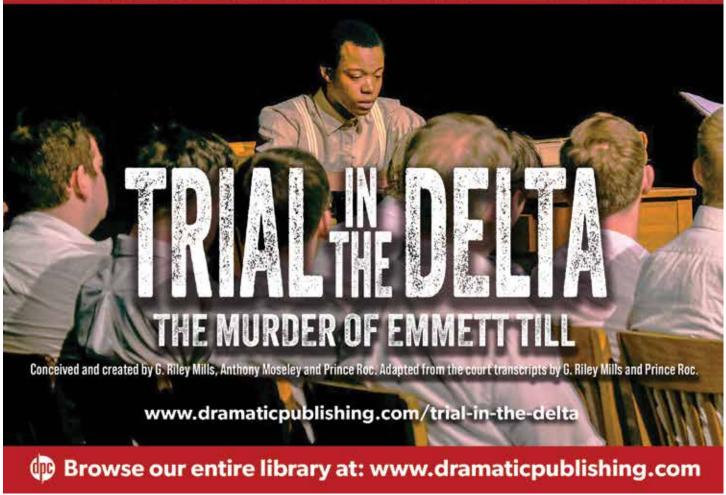
We got a resounding "Yes!" from each of the four TNT Quad IV sister theatres we contacted. (Because of its size, Texas is divided into four Theatre Network of Texas quadrants for mutual benefit, interchange, and service: **texastheatres.org/quads**.) The Plaza Theatre in Wharton, Brazosport Center Stages in Clute, The Players Theatre Company at the Owen Theatre in Conroe, and the Art Park Players of Deer Park all opened their doors and welcomed us warmly.

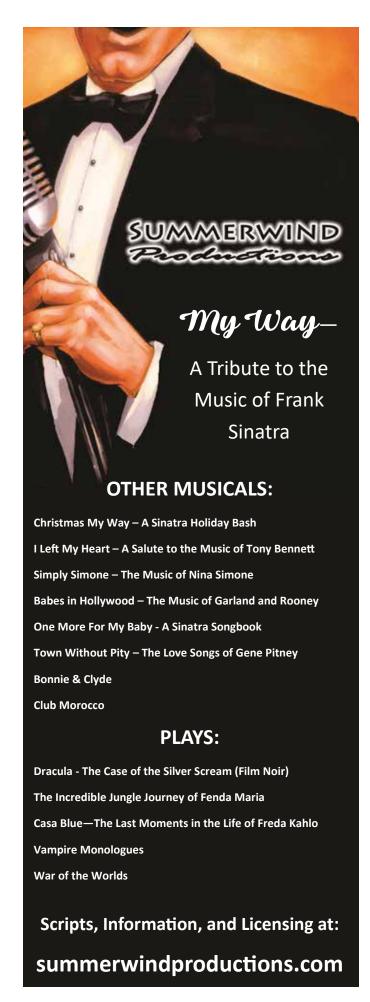
Spreading the Word

With performance dates selected, we began working with our theatre's Marketing and Publicity Chair, Becca de San Andres, to spread the continued on page 28 >









word, both locally and to the audiences of the theatres we'd be visiting. Along with two Baytown-based performances in June, Becca publicized our neighboring performances on our company's website, linking each company's page to ours—thereby "spreading the wealth" and connecting our audiences with theirs.

In an extra-special evening of theatre in Clute, Brazosport Center Stages also performed their 2025 TEXFest-winning production of Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*. Sharing both productions made for an excellent evening of theatre, celebrating both companies that had represented Texas at the AACT Region VI festival.



Wharton, TX's Plaza Theatre marquee welcoming BLT's Tuesdays with Morrie



Learning from Every Stage

"Working our production in front of the audiences in Wharton, Clute, Conroe, and Deer Park has been such a benefit," Jim said at the time. "Even though this is not a laugh-a-minute story, Lyle and I can feel the energies coming from the audiences—and that makes a huge difference for us."

For our lighting and sound engineers, this tour was also an opportunity to learn new boards on the fly. That way, when we arrived at the Hoyt Sherman stage in Des Moines, the nerves and butterflies of performing in a space that's not our own was much lessened—a significant hurdle to clear.

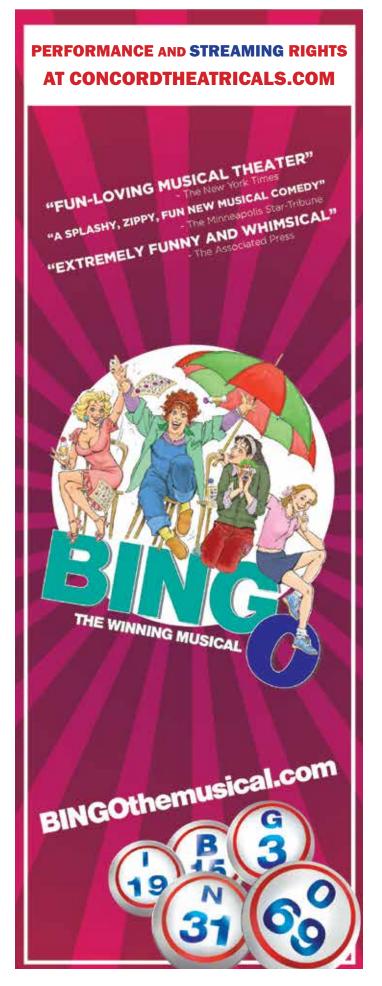
A Grateful Company

Baytown Little Theater is extremely grateful to the friends and venues who welcomed us, supported our journey, and allowed us to hone our production through those shared performances. It has been a true blessing to work on Tuesdays with Morrie with them. And we are proud beyond words to have represented Baytown, our state of Texas, and all our friends and fellow companies throughout AACT Region VI at the national festival in Des Moines.



Lyle Tate is an AACT Board of Directors member, AACTtrained adjudicator, and festival commissioner from Houston, TX. In addition to acting and directing, Lyle's work centers around positive, authentic leadership, and volunteer growth and retention via affective commitment.





Regionally Speaking Strength Through Community

Jamie Peterson, AACT Region III Representative



Jamie Peterson, AACT Region III Representative (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin), examines the challenges facing community theatres—from shrinking funding and volunteer bases to generational leadership transitions—both in his region and nationwide. He advocates for statewide support networks to enhance resource-sharing, collaboration, and long-term sustainability, ensuring community theatres continue to thrive for future generations.

In communities across the country, theatres serve as cultural cornerstones—nurturing local talent, preserving the arts, and providing a stage for voices that might otherwise go unheard. Yet despite their vital role, many of these organizations are quietly struggling. The decline in federal arts funding, a diminishing pool of volunteers, and internal generational conflicts threaten the very survival of local theatre.

In this environment, the idea of a shared state theatre organization—one that connects community theatres under a unified support system—has never been more critical.

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The Independent Spirit of Community Theatre

Community theatres often operate autonomously, each with its own history, culture, and leadership. These organizations are typically built from the ground up by passionate individuals, and their independence is a source of pride. Often, these passionate and driven members steer much of what the organization does.

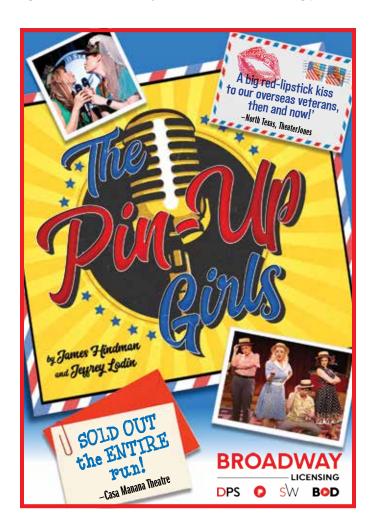
It's not difficult to understand how theatres like these can become insulated from other groups. This isolation is usually unintentional—the product of packed production schedules and a limited volunteer base. Convincing long-standing community theatre members to refocus even a small portion of their time on a state organization—especially when trust and communication across regions may be limited—is a delicate endeavor.

The Shrinking Safety Net

Federal support for the arts, never lavish to begin with, has become increasingly scarce and competitive. Theatres that once relied on annual grants are now struggling to stay afloat. At the same time, younger generations are less inclined—or less able—to volunteer regularly, often due to economic pressures, career demands, or a simple lack of awareness that these groups need help.

The Generational Bottleneck

Perhaps the most difficult challenge is the generational leadership gap. Many community theatres are still led by the same volunteers who helped found them decades ago. While their dedication is deeply admira-



ble, it can sometimes come at the cost of progress. These leaders may, often unintentionally, resist new ideas or methods, creating an environment where younger participants feel stifled or excluded. The result is a leadership bottleneck that discourages the very succession needed to sustain the organization into the future.

The Case for Statewide Collaboration

This is where an effective state-level organization can play a transformative role—not as a controlling body, but as a connector and amplifier.

Imagine a shared database of set designs, costume inventories, and sound equipment available for loan or rental between theatres. Picture a centralized training platform offering workshops on grant writing, sound design, or DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) practices. A statewide organization can also serve as a mediator in leadership transitions, offering mentorship programs that pair seasoned theatre veterans with emerging leaders. This model helps preserve institutional knowledge while opening the door to fresh energy and new perspectives.

A Call to Connect

The story of community theatre has always been one of collaboration, improvisation, and resilience. Those same traits must now be applied to how these institutions relate to one another.

Forming a statewide theatre organization requires trust, patience, and a willingness to evolve. If there is currently no such organization in your state, now is the time to unite behind the curtain, pool your talents and share your stages—not just for survival, but to ensure that the next generation can take a bow under the same spotlight we've cherished for so long.

If you would like to connect to Jamie or any other AACT regional representatives, visit aact.org/regions. A current list of state organizations can be found at aact.org/states





Inclusivity in Theatre

Letting Everyone Shine: The Transformative Power of The Penguin Project

Scot MacDonald

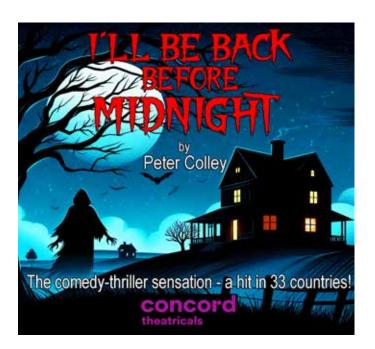
The beauty of community theatre lies in its inclusiveness. At any given performance, you'll see people from all walks of life coming together—bringing their unique experiences, perspectives, and talents to the stage. The Penguin Project takes that spirit even further, by providing young artists with developmental and physical disabilities the opportunity to shine, center stage.



Mentor Olivia Reedy with Penguin artist A J Witherspoon as Winthrop Paroo in The Music Man JR.

A Spark of Inspiration

I've attended the National Director's Conference for nearly a dozen years, but it was at the 2019 conference that I was truly inspired. Theatre leaders from across the country shared powerful testimonials about The Penguin Project, describing it as a game-changer for their organizations. I left that event energized and committed to bringing the program to life at my theatre, the Memorial Opera House in Valparaiso, Indiana.



As we began conversations with local leaders and advocates in the disability community, it became clear that these young artists represented one of the most strategically underserved populations in our area. I've always believed we have a responsibility to help create the world we want to live in—and that means ensuring everyone has a place. Art has the power to transcend differences and unite us. When I brought the idea to our staff, it took about three seconds for everyone to say an emphatic "yes" to making it happen.

Building Something New

Of course, we had concerns—about sustainability, funding, and the support staff needed to ensure our Penguins and mentors had the same high-quality experience as someone in any of our productions. But those concerns were quickly met by an incredible outpouring of support from volunteers, donors, and community members who were just as committed to seeing Indiana's first—and only—chapter succeed.

Now entering its third year, the impact has been nothing short of extraordinary. We expected 20–25 participants that first year. We ended up with 80 artists and mentors. The need for this program was undeniable.

A Growing Community

Since then, the Penguin Parents have created an active booster group that fundraises, promotes the program, and builds community year-round. Our mentors have launched their own efforts—one even opened a drive-through lemonade stand to help cover costs. Some of our artists have asked to form an advisory committee to help guide future productions and provide insight into accessibility.



Mentor Allison Dillman, artist Olivia Ferantella (Marian Paroo), artist Matthew Isley (Harold Hill), and Mentor Jakob Georgion dancing the "Shipoopi" in The Music Man JR.

The program has grown so beautifully that, in collaboration with Penguin Project Founder and Director Dr. Andy and his team, we launched The Penguin Players for older teens and adults with exceptionalities. Lifelong friendships have been made, and lives—onstage and off—are being transformed.

National Impact, Local Pride

It was an honor to witness Dr. Andy and Kathy Morgan's 20-plus years of work on The Penguin Project recognized at AACTFest this June. Their impact—seen in nearly 60 chapters across the country—is immeasurable. Their work is creating more inclusive, welcoming spaces in community theatres everywhere and setting artists and mentors alike on paths to even brighter futures.

Lisa Von Werder

Looking Ahead

At Memorial Opera House, we're now heading into our third year with this program—and we're just getting started. We had two completely sold-out performances of The Music Man JR. in July. This January, we'll kick off our 2026 season with High Tide Cabaret—a collection of favorite beach-themed songs selected by our artists. And next summer, our Penguins will dive into a new adventure with Disney and Pixar's Finding Nemo JR.



The cast of The Music Man JR.

A Stage for Everyone

I won't pretend that creating a program like this is easy. It takes time. It takes resources. It takes a willingness to learn (and Dr. Andy, his team, and our friends from AACT are more than willing to help). It takes a team that believes in the mission and a community willing to show up.

But what I've learned—and what I share with any theatre considering taking the leap—is that you will never regret opening your stage to The Penguin Project. The joy, the growth, the bonds that form... it changes lives. It changes communities. It changed ours.

Every artist deserves a moment in the spotlight. And at Memorial Opera House, we're going to keep making sure that light shines just as brightly for everyone.

If you're interested in starting a Penguin Project chapter, visit penguinproject.org.

Scot PJ MacDonald is the Venue Director of Memorial Opera House, a department of Valpo Parks in Valparaiso, Indiana. He proudly serves on the AACT Board of Directors as Treasurer.







Broadway's Top Dog: Bill Berloni's Life with Sandy and Beyond

Lou Ursone

What do you say when a producer gives you \$35 and tells you to go buy a dog and train it for a new musical? Like most actors asked about a specific skill, the response is: "Sure, I can do that." The show was *Annie*, making its debut at Connecticut's Goodspeed Opera House in the summer of 1976—and the rest is theatre history.

That's how a nearly 50-year career as an animal trainer for Broadway, film, and television began for William "Bill" Berloni.

"I'm now a museum relic," Berloni jokes, referring to the *Annie* display at New York City's Museum of Broadway. Andrea McArdle's original red dress is on display, along with paw prints of the first Sandy and a montage of pictures from the original production.

Berloni is the only member of the original production team to have worked on every Broadway staging of *Annie*. (He didn't handle the 1978 London premiere, due to the UK's required six-month animal quarantine.)

'It's Always About the Art'

As an aspiring young actor, Berloni found more meaningful roles and training opportunities in community theatre than in his college program. (Today, about 30% of Berloni's business is with community and educational theatres.) Though accepted into Yale Drama School and NYU, he couldn't afford either. Instead, he remained in Connecticut, attending Central Connecticut State University and taking a technical internship at the renowned Goodspeed Opera House in 1975.

"I wanted to learn everything I could from these New York professionals," he said.

The producer then threw him a bone: training the dog came with the promise of an Actors' Equity card.

Fifty years later, he's recognized as Broadway's foremost animal trainer, receiving a Tony Award for Excellence in the Theatre in 2011. His resume includes 35+ Broadway shows, over 200 Off-Broadway, regional, and touring productions, 40+ films, and 100+ television series. Remarkably, nearly every animal he's worked with has been a rescue.

When asked why he still works with community and school theatres despite such high-profile credits, Berloni replied:

"Broadway is great—the money is great—but my trainers and I cherish community and educational theatre. It reminds us why we got into theatre in the first place. We're surrounded by people doing it for the love of it. That's where we all started. It's all theatre to me. It's always about the art."

Where He Was Meant to Be

After Annie closed at Goodspeed, Berloni moved to New York City with his Equity card—and Sandy as a roommate. He began studying at



Cover photo for Bill Berloni's book Broadway Tails - Heartfelt Stories of Rescued Dogs Who Became Showbiz Superstars

the Stella Adler Conservatory at NYU. When news broke that *Annie* was transferring to Broadway, Berloni was asked to continue as Sandy's trainer and handler.

"I had no idea what the Broadway experience would be like or how long it would last," he said. "I was taking voice and dance classes during the day and working *Annie* at night."

Annie became a massive hit, and Berloni was asked to handle the national tour.

"I needed to train others to run the shows, but I didn't even know what I was doing—so I just started hiring relatives...and a girlfriend I married," he laughed.

He stayed with the show for its entire 2,377-performance run.

Berloni has worked with dozens of A-list celebrities, including Audra McDonald on the current revival of *Gypsy*, and Bernadette Peters with the 2003 revival.

Another Broadway gig was the 1980 revival of *Camelot*, starring Richard Burton and directed by Alan Jay Lerner.

"The opportunity to watch Burton up close was too much to pass up," he said. "Every performance at Lincoln Center, at the end of the first act, I would sneak to the back of the house and watch Burton's Excalibur speech—it was breathtaking," he recalled.

That two-year run also brought Berloni personal clarity.

"I looked around the audition rooms and realized I wasn't as tall, handsome, or as good a dancer as the others. That realization—that I was exactly where I was meant to be—saved me years of rejection."



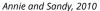
Sandy Returns

For the 2012 Broadway revival of Annie, director James Lapine proposed casting a pit bull as Sandy. Berloni explained it would take six months to train one. So "good ol' Sandy" returned as we know him.

Ironically, despite Berloni's history with Annie, he and others hired for the original film adaptation were bought out of their contracts due to a scandal involving the original producer. He did, however, work on the 2014 film starring Jamie Foxx, Cameron Diaz, and Quvenzhané Wallis. It was while working on that film that Berloni realized just how deeply the musical was ingrained in the social fabric of America.

"We were filming Quvenzhané (Annie) walking down the street in Harlem, lip-syncing to 'Tomorrow' when Sandy runs up to meet her. All of a sudden people on the street started singing along! I'll never forget that moment."







Annie and Sandy, 2018

Live Animals in Theatre

Berloni emphasizes desensitizing animals to the theatre environment. He brings his dogs to other Broadway shows to listen to the audience, get them used to applause, orchestras—everything.

"Without that, a dog may perform perfectly in the rehearsal room, but then be frightened on the stage. When we do a show, we also don't have just one dog," he added, explaining that if something goes wrong in tech, "we can switch dogs out, an option not likely available to a community theatre."

Asked if a community theatre might use a local animal on stage, Berloni is quick to respond: "Don't. You wouldn't use explosives, fire, or special effects without a professional. It's the same with animals."

Despite his success, Berloni left New York after becoming disillusioned by the lack of union protections for animal performers. He returned to Connecticut, took a job as house manager at Goodspeed, and went back to school to study theatre management. But the call of the wild beckoned. In 1987, Lincoln Center called: would he train the dog for Patti LuPone's Anything Goes?

"I said, 'These are my terms.' "They accepted, and I never looked back," settling into a permanent career as a trainer and consultant.

At the White House—and Back Home

Aspiring to a life in politics, political interns can be pretty dog-gone excited for a visit to the White House. Berloni's Annie work brought him to the White House seven times—three visits with President Carter, two with Reagan, one with George H.W. Bush, and one with Clinton.

Of course, he'd already spent time in FDR's Oval Office—on stage.

Back at Goodspeed Opera House, where it all started in 1975, Berloni was honored at their annual gala with a life-size bronze statue of Sandy on the theatre's front steps. A plaque reads:

Placed in honor of William (Bill) Berloni, who began his career by coaching and training Sandy.

And what's next for Berloni? "Tomorrow!"

Author's Note

I've had the good fortune to work with Bill on several productions at Curtain Call in Stamford, Connecticut, and have appeared in commercial and film projects with his talented animal artists. He's gentle yet firm, but above all, a fierce advocate for the safety and well-being of his animal actorson stage and off.

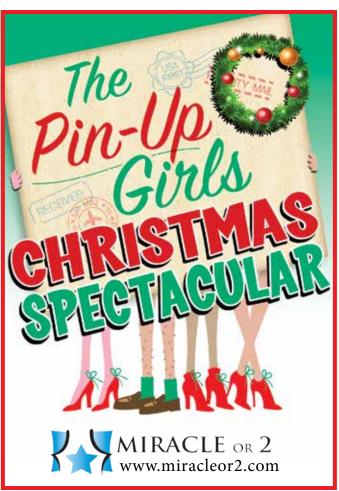
Berloni lives on his 90-acre family farm in Haddam, Connecticut, with his wife, Dorothy, and dozens of active and retired animal performers. He maintains a thriving career in stage and screen, and serves as Director of Animal Behavior for the New York Humane Society.



Sandy statue honoring Berloni at Goodspeed Opera House



Lou Ursone is the Executive Director of Curtain Call, Inc. in Stamford, Connecticut, a member of the AACT Board of Directors, and serves on the Spotlight Editorial Team.



Advocacy Matters

Lou Ursone

A highly inappropriate and inequitable state budget—which funded a few "favorites," while leaving dozens of other theatres with crumbs, rather than reasonable support—is the focus today.

Levels of state government arts funding across the country vary greatly, from a high of \$240 million in the state of New York to nine states with funding under \$1 million (based on 2023 data). Understanding the legislative process is key.

Budgets are not created in a vacuum, though it sometimes seems they are. When a state budget contains, on average, 800 pages or more, it's difficult for any legislator to conduct a thorough review. Enter the appropriations committee.

While I've written many times here that we need to regularly engage our local, state, and federal legislators, the real power sits at the committee level. I'm not saying we should abandon broader efforts, but since legislators often empower colleagues on appropriation committees to conduct a deeper dive into funding decisions, that's where we need to focus our efforts.

In speaking with many legislators at all levels since 2020, their common advice has been: make sure our voices are heard. Inundated daily with hundreds or even thousands of emails, letters, and voicemails, legislators rely on staffers to sort through correspondence. A smattering of messages from a community theatre may go unnoticed. But when hundreds of patrons speak up, legislators take note.

Can you imagine the impact if every community theatre in the country rallied 1,000 or more patrons to write about the same issue? That kind of volume can be monumental—especially at the state level. Campaigns like that helped make community theatres eligible for the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) that provided millions in relief funding in 2021.

In one state, a biennial budget funded only a small group—out of nearly 100 theatres (both community and professional)—through direct line-item appropriations, leaving a much smaller pool for competitive grants. One theatre spoke out, addressing the issue in curtain speeches and newsletters. After a single, issue-focused email,

the state arts office (copied on the message) received several hundred emails the following morning.

The campaign continued for several months, targeting members of the appropriations committee directly, sharing details and contact information. More than 1,000 voters responded, and legislators took notice. Some theatre companies joined in; others hesitated, fearing retaliation or damage to future funding prospects. More coordinated action could have yielded even greater results, but legislators took note.

Curtain speeches proved to be especially effective. Being present to discuss the issue at intermission or after the show mattered. Providing bullet points and sample letters was helpful, but encouraging supporters to personalize their messages was crucial. (Petitions are far less effective.)

Advocacy starts at home. Every board and staff member should participate—reaching out to their own networks. Board members, in particular, must step up as ambassadors for the theatre.

At press time, it remained unclear whether the federal administration's original proposal to defund the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was reflected in the federal budget bill passed in early July. What is clear: we all need—no, we must—take an active role in advocating for the arts. Stay informed by visiting the Americans for the Arts website regularly: americansforthearts.org.

(Statistical data from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.)



Lou Ursone is the Executive Director of Curtain Call, Inc. in Stamford, Connecticut, a member of the AACT Board of Directors, and serves on the Spotlight Editorial Team.



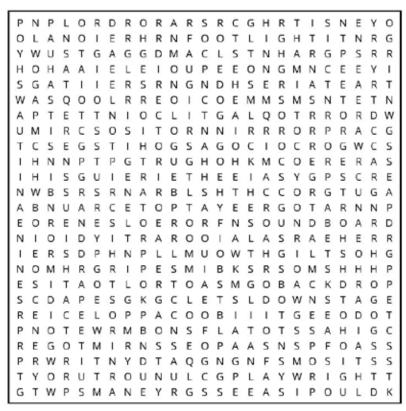


Spotlight Gets Playful!

We've added a little extra fun to your reading time—puzzles! Beginning with this Fall issue, each edition of *Spotlight* will include a theatre-themed game to test your skills and tickle your brain. Enjoy this month's Word Search packed with stage-inspired terms. See how many you can find, and get ready for more curtain-call-worthy challenges in the issues to come!

All the World's a Stage

Puzzle by Lynn Nelson



INTERMISSION UPSTAGE FLAT PLAYWRIGHT SET STRIKE REHEARSAL WINGS SOUND BOARD SOLLOQUY MONOLOGUE PROPS SCENERY BACKDROP FOOTLIGHT

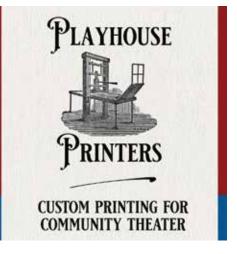
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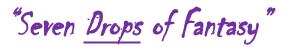


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By Erik Anderson



The Sack / The Troll

&

HEARTBEATS

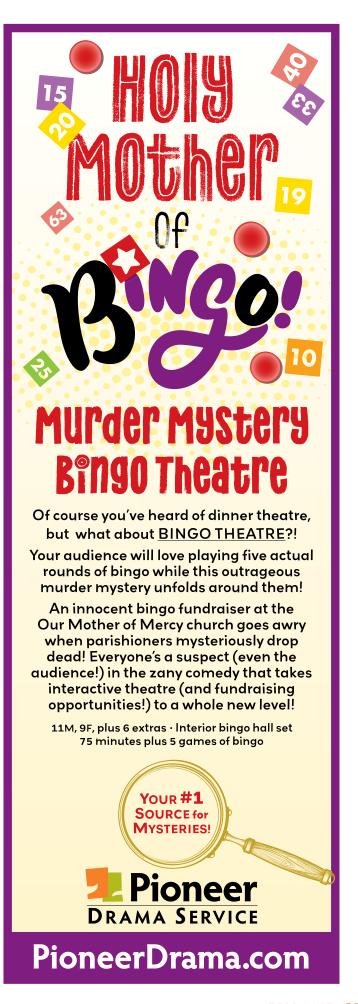
The Four Bores / Leaf and a Cabbage / Dirty Genes / Finger of Fate / The Searchers

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"WHY, <u>UM</u>—I ALWAYS THOUGHT CHOPPED UP WAS ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES." COTTAGE CHEESE



New Roles

Market House Theatre, in Paducah, Kentucky, has announced two new appointments to its education team.



Emily Hensel has been named Education Director, overseeing all theatre and dance programming. Hensel has led the theatre's DanceMHT program for the past 10 years, growing it from a single class in 2015 into a robust schedule running Monday through Saturday, serving more than 200 students each week. Her journey with Market House Theatre began at age 16 as a performer in the touring group,

Story Theatre, where she also assisted with productions. She later earned a B.A. in Dance from Belhaven University in Jackson, Mississippi. In addition to her leadership of DanceMHT, Hensel has served as resident choreographer and, more recently, director of several educational productions. Her credits include Disney's Frozen Kids at Market House Theatre, Mean Girls JR. (as director/choreographer for the MHT Theatre in Schools

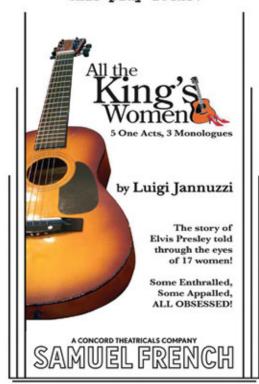
program at Paducah Middle School), and directing Gifted and Talented productions at several local schools.



Hadley Pierce has been named Assistant Education Director. Pierce is a theatre educator and director originally from Paducah, where her love for theatre also began at Market House Theatre. She holds a B.A. in Theatre Education from Morehead State University. Her recent performance and production credits include Snoopy, lighting design for You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, stage manager for Love/Sick, Hattie in The Women of

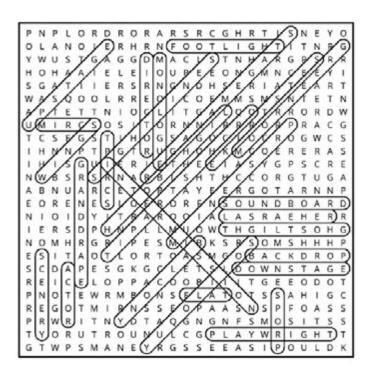
Lockerbie, and Ouiser in Steel Magnolias. Pierce was twice nominated for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship through the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). She spent three years touring with Morehead State's educational theatre troupe, bringing live performances to schools across the region. She has also worked with Stage Door Manor as a teacher and counselor, and with Lexington Children's Theatre through their Shooting Stars Youtheatre satellite program.

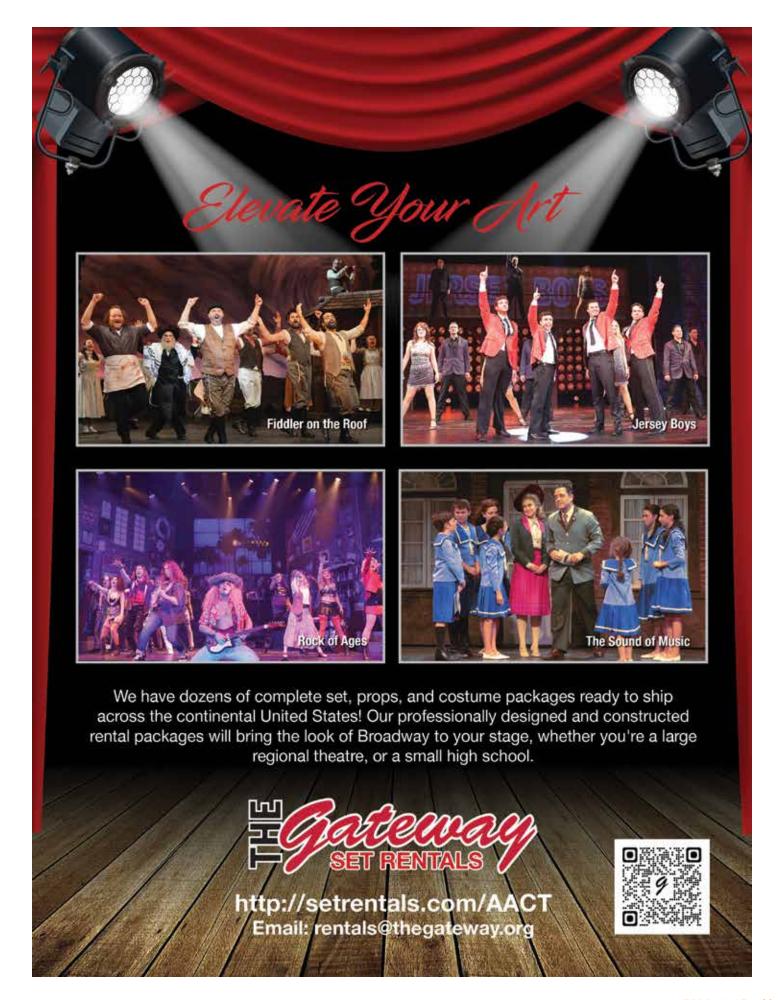
"FROM CALIFORNIA TO AUSTRALIA, this play rocks!"



Publisher: ConcordTheatricals.com
Playwright: LuigiJannuzzi.com

Word Search Solution





Member Theatre Hub

The Past is Present

Innovation at the Woodland Opera House

Stephen Peithman

Outside-the-box thinking is a requirement at Northern California's Woodland Opera House, where staff meet with unusual challenges in offering stage productions and educational programs year-round.

Built in 1885, and rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1895, the historic structure is also a state park—meaning neither the exterior nor interior, including the stage, can be altered.

Opera House staff have worked through that challenge in inventive

ways.

Restored and Reborn

Closed and boarded up for decades, the building was purchased in 1971 by the county historical society to save it from the wrecking ball. The Opera House was declared a state historical park in 1976, and the property was given to the State of California in 1980. Full restoration began the next year.

The building reopened in 1989 as a California State Historic Landmark after a seven-year, \$2 million-plus restoration (over \$5 million in today's dollars). Though the state owns the building, it provides no financial support. The Opera House is completely self-sufficient, attracting audiences from

Woodland, nearby Sacramento—the state capital—and beyond.

The interior was painstakingly restored to its turn-of-the-century grandeur, including reproductions of original wallpaper friezes, paint colors, and carpeting. New mainfloor theatre seating was installed, and the historic pew-like benches in the balcony were repaired or carefully replaced.

A three-story addition—including an elevator—was built adjacent to the historic building, after a long state approval process. Its brick exterior blends in well with the original building and includes offices, restrooms, and a meeting area on the top floor, also used for concessions during intermissions.

However, the historic theatre building itself cannot be altered—inside or out—creating ongoing challenges for staging productions in the 21st century.

Working Within Limits

"Our stage area is not huge," explains Executive Director Tom Burmester. "It's basically a cube—25 feet wide by 25 feet deep by 25 feet high—although the fly space goes up much, much higher."

The green room and dressing rooms are downstairs, underneath the stage. Stairs on either side lead up to the narrow wings. (Additional storage space is nearby for sets and costumes, as well as the Theatre and Dance Annex that houses both education programs and Burmester's office)

Given the dollars, most theatres could be renovated or enlarged. But

that's not possible here.

Fortunately, Burmester and his designers have found clever ways to work with this reality. One solution is to use the ground-level box-seat areas on either side of the stage. No longer in use for their original purpose, they're often called upon as performance spaces.

"They provide a way for us to create quite a bit of additional real estate," Burmester explains. But it also means designing set pieces that can

be installed without harm to the walls or floors.

For a recent production of *Something Rotten!*, platforms were first laid on the floor of the boxes, then flats were secured to the backs of the platforms, so that nothing was attached to the historic walls or floors. For extra stability, some flats were supported by airplane wire that went up and looped over an existing device on the edge of the balcony, then attached to a stack of flyweights on the balcony floor.

Making a Scene

Another way staff maximizes production values is through inventive use of scenic projections—a godsend for a small stage with narrow wings. [See more on projections in our article on page 22.]

"We have two projectors—one in the front and one in the back," says Burmester. "The back one can throw either on the cyc or on the rear wall.



Main entrance of the Woodland Opera House. Area behind the A-frame sign is the modern addition, with elevator.

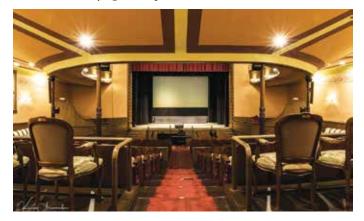


For the production of Amélie, the former box seat areas on both sides of the stage were used as performance spaces. (This wide-angle shot makes the right side appear larger than it actually is.)

The powerful front projector "can hit almost everywhere on the stage," he adds. "We've used it for targeted surface lighting, but also for front light, where it can provide really interesting texture. For example, in the subway scene in *Amélie the Musical*, actors were in front of the scrim, and we projected the moving lights of the subway onto them. That, plus a little bit of sidelight, was all we needed for that scene. And it looked really, really cool."

Using QLab software, the front projector can target specific areas. In Amélie, for example, "we had different set panels lit up at different times, and you couldn't tell that it was all coming from the same projector."

Amélie sticks in his mind because he also directed the show, allowing him to explore the use of projections as an integral part of the storytelling. He's especially proud of the scene when "Amélie's mother is giving her lessons and drawing on a chalkboard. We had the front projector animating what she was talking about, as if she was drawing it on the chalkboard, while the rear projector was going simultaneously with math equations that were sort of flying, which put us inside Amélie's mind."



View of the house from the back. Former box-seat areas, seen behind the supporting posts, can be used as performing areas, as shown in the photo on page 42.

Projections, he says, offer a director more options for shaping the look of a show than might otherwise be possible. That's particularly important working in a historic theatre with a small stage.

"We sell 392 seats," Burmester explains, "but there's actually quite a few more than that. We keep the extreme sides of the balcony roped off, since sightlines there are not great. The only time we use those areas is for our educational showcases, to handle the large number of parents and family."

The back of the balcony is home to what would be the lighting and sound booth in most theatres. But constructing one would require changes to the original structure, so, instead of a booth, there's a table—at least until some more out-of-the-box thinking finds a solution.

Spaced Out

The number of stage productions each year has varied in recent years but is currently five musicals and one play. Those, plus the frequent presentations by the theatre's educational programs, mean the stage is in use for all but two weeks a year.

"I wish we could build in some breathing room," Burmester says, "and I've tried to. But it's like we can't pause. If we're going to keep our doors open, we have to be constantly producing and generating income."

Burmester would like to take pressure off the main stage by creating a black-box space in the lower level of the nearby dance and rehearsal building. However, that would require major renovation—HVAC upgrades and an elevator installation. It's aspirational now, Burmester acknowledges, but it remains a goal.

Despite the many challenges it faces, the Opera House has gained an enviable reputation in the Sacramento area.

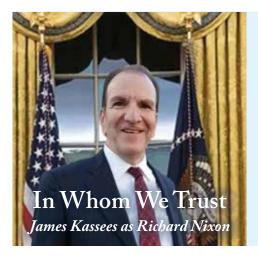
"People often tell me how impressed they are with our production values here," he says. "But then, people are often surprised by what's possible in community theatre."

Burmester has worked in both professional and community theatre, and in his opinion, "right now, the real heart of American theatre is in community theatre. Because the stories you're seeing are being told by your neighbors and your community. That immediacy produces a certain kind of resonance in the house that just doesn't happen anywhere else."

A longer, more detailed version of this article (and additional, larger photos) as well as insights into season selection and budgeting, is available at aact.org/woh



Shakespeare (Christopher Travlos) and his backup singers in the former box seat area for Something Rotten! The crowd below is standing on the house floor, between the stage and the first row of seats.



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Resource Center: Recipes for an Effective Board

Stephen Peithman

Developing a dynamic governing board has often been compared to preparing a delicious nine-course meal. It requires following a tested recipe and using the best ingredients.

With that in mind, here is a vetted menu of online and other resources to help your organization's board be at its most effective.

AACT

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AACT's Resource Library offers members articles, forms, sample documents, and more related to boards and governance. On the website's menu, click on Resources, then under the Member Only section, click Resource Library. (You must be signed in to view).

Arts Consulting Group

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While ACG is primarily a provider of interim management, executive search, strategic planning and research services for arts organizations, it also publishes Arts Insights, a free digital publication featuring articles on board development. You can subscribe, or simply browse past issues for topics like "Board Building: The Nominating Committee's Role," "Creating a Five-Star Board in the Arts and Culture Sector," and "Strategic Planning for Arts and Culture Organizations: A Roadmap to Sustainability and Impact."

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Offers a variety of tools, resources, and research data to increase board effectiveness and strengthen organizational impact. On the main menu, click on Support for Your Board, then Resources by Topic.

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Offers nonprofit support, free information, and referral services—including boards & governance resources—to organizations throughout the U.S.

Blue Avocado

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Independent Sector

independentsector.org

A national membership organization that offers public access to information on governance, volunteerism, and nonprofit policy issues. On the main menu, click on About, then Resources.

Nonprofit Hub

nonprofitresourcehub.org/articles

Provides a library of free nonprofit resources and educational content, including articles, on-demand webinars, helpful guides, podcast episodes, and the Nonprofit Knowledge Base Newsletter. All are easily accessed from the main menu.

Nonprofit Resource Hub

nonprofitresourcehub.org

This trade association serves the entire nonprofit sector and offers newsletters and articles on board development and governance. Click on Resources in the main menu.

State and Regional Resources

Many states have nonprofit associations offering board development resources. Start with the directory on the National Council of Nonprofits website. Scroll to the bottom of the home page and click Find Your State's

You can also search online for nonprofit resources in your state or region. (For example, "nonprofit resources Michigan" or "nonprofit resources New England.")

Recent Books

While many classic titles on board development and related topics are available, the following books were published or updated in the past five years and address current issues and best practices of nonprofit boards in these sometimes-uncertain times.

- Basterfield, Brian: The Effective Communication Method: 9 Keys to Master Communication Skills [365 Self-Growth Publishing, 2023]
- Cossin, Didier: High Performance Boards: A Practical Guide to Improving and Energizing Your Governance, 2nd Edition [Wiley, 2024]
- Feld, Brad, Matt Blumberg, et al: Startup Boards: A Field Guide to Building and Leading an Effective Board of Directors [Wiley, 2022]
- Garry, Joan: Joan Garry's Guide to Nonprofit Leadership: Because the World Is Counting on You, 2nd Edition [Wiley, 2020]
- Kouzes, James M. and Barry Z. Posner: The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations, 7th Edition [Jossey-Bass, 2023]
- Mancuso, Anthony: Nonprofit Meetings, Minutes & Records: How to Properly Document Your Nonprofit's Actions, Fourth Edition [Nolo,
- Oregon Nonprofit Corporation: The 2025 Nonprofit Board of Directors Toolkit (digital) [nonprofitpublications.net]
- Robert, Henry M., et al: Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th Edition [Public Affairs, 2020]
- Younger, Heather R: The Art of Active Listening: How People at Work Feel Heard, Valued, and Understood [Berrett-Koehler, 2023]



Calendar of Events

Dates	Event	St	City	Phone	Web Site
Oct 10-26	NewPlayFest Opening: <i>Listen</i> by Brigid Amos	KS	Salina	785-827-3033	salinatheatre.com/project/listen/
Nov 13-15	National Directors Conference	TX	San Antonio	817-732-3177	aact.org/ndc

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A Historic Musical by Judith Sapperstein & Gary Murway

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discovers he can hear the voices of the past... through the very furniture that witnessed it all.

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- · Engaging songs that bring the past to life
- Romance and humor woven into a revolutionary tale
- A powerful finale where history finally speaks—if you're willing to listen

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https://tlcscripts.com/thefreedomring



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