aactWORLDFEST 2022

CTMC 2022

Spotlight on Swings and Understudies

TEAMS 2022

AACT YouthFest 2023
“THIS SHOW IS AN UTTER CHARM BOMB!”

The New York Times

The Marvelous Wonderettes

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Hello, friends--

I can't believe that we are already moving towards summer and the great things that it brings with it. This past winter certainly brought a new set of challenges and I sincerely hope that you were able to tackle the hurdles placed in your path. Here in the Pacific Northwest, we faced the double whammy of extreme weather and record COVID cases. Recovering from those certainly made for an interesting start to the year.

As you will see from this issue, AACT is moving ahead at full speed, with festivals, conferences, workshops, webinars, and roundtables. And for that I am grateful, because in the 12 years I've been involved with AACT, these events truly have changed who I am, helping me grow as an artist and an administrator.

Many of you have heard me tell my “theatre epiphany” stories, the moments that leave me feeling that I've grown in some way. For example, I attended an aactWORLDFEST in Venice, Florida, a few cycles ago, which had a performance I will always remember. A visiting company from Russia presented The Miracle Worker in their native language. While we in the audience didn't understand what was being said on stage, we knew the story and were transfixed by the powerful production. The acting, direction, and production elements were brilliant.

There are two moments that I keep with me from that experience. One was when I looked down the aisle at my fellow audience members and saw tears, matching my own, glistening on everyone's face. It is also the only time that I have witnessed a standing ovation, *en masse*. And it wasn't one person who began it—the entire audience rose to their feet at once, with thunderous applause.

Memories like these are among the reasons I attend AACT events. Personal and professional growth is another. I encourage you to take part in one of the many AACT events offered this year. I assure you, it can truly be life-changing.

Best,

Chris Serface
March/April 2022

**aactWORLDFEST 2022**
Register now for this summer's festival in Venice, Florida, and delight in performances from top-quality theatre troupes from around the globe. Venice Theatre staff is committed to making a thrilling festival that's safe to attend.

**CTMC 2022**
AACT is offering a choice of two Community Theatre Management Conference virtual sessions, one East Coast Session (March 4-6) and one West Coast Session (March 18-20). Gain new insights and solid, practical information on a wide variety of topics important to you and your theatre.

**Top Ten Reasons to Attend TEAMS Conference 2022**
Hosted by the Hale Centre Theatre in Salt Lake City, Utah, TEAMS is an educational conference offering tracks in Technical Theatre, Educational Programming, Artistic Direction/Vision, Marketing, and Stage Management.

**National Directors Conference**
Attendee Susan Goes shares takeaways from last November's conference for full-time paid staff of AACT-member theatres. More than 80 community theatre leaders from across the country attended the event, held for the first time in San Antonio, Texas.

**AACT YouthFest 2023**
The 3rd National Youth Theatre Festival, a celebration of youth theatre, will be held in conjunction with AACTFest 2023, the National Theatre Festival, June 12-17, 2023, in Louisville, Kentucky.

**Shining a Spotlight on Swings**
David A. VanCleave, AACT's Education Coordinator, looks at the ways community theatres can work with swings, understudies, and standbys to protect our volunteers and uphold our stories in COVID times.

**On the Cover**
*Representing Brazil at aactWORLDFEST 2022, Caio Stolai performs Circo Poeira (Dust Circus), with an innovative and emotional one-man performance. See pages 8-11 for information and more theatre troupes from around the world performing at aactWORLDFEST 2022 in Venice, Florida, June 20-26.*

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AACT welcomes Spotlight input and requests for advertising rates. Contact David Cockerell at david@aact.org to submit content. Contact Darlene DeLorenzo at darlene@aact.org or 512-267-4509 for advertising rates and specs.
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VIII TBD
IX Jon Douglas Rake
Tacoma, WA (2022)
X Dane Winters
Germany (US Army) (2022)

Upcoming Events
USITT Conference and Stage Expo
Baltimore, Maryland
March 2-5, 2022
usitt.org/conference22
AACT Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC) 2022
East Coast Session – Virtual
March 4-6
West Coast Session - Virtual
March 18-20
aact.org/ctmc
SETC 2022 Annual Convention
Memphis, Tennessee
March 9-13
setc.org
AACT Online Roundtables
Corporate Sponsorship
March 15
Volunteer Management
April 19
2022 schedule: aact.org/listings
AACT NewPlayFest World Premiere
The Café Mocha Murders, by Deanna Strasse
Golden Chain Theatre
Oakhurst, California
March 25–April 10, 2022
goldenchaintheatre.org

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

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AACT Spotlight March/April 2022
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A Note from Lori Chase, Festival Coordinator

As coordinator for aactWORLDFEST, my job is to make sure all the pieces come together to create a festival that you’ll enjoy so much that you’ll want to join us again—and again, and again.

I know that many of you are concerned about the ongoing pandemic and might question whether you should attend an in-person festival. Let me assure you that my colleagues and I are doing everything possible to keep safe everyone who walks through our doors. Our COVID-19 task force developed guidelines and protocols early in the pandemic, and we continually review these protocols and adapt our procedures to reflect current recommendations and regulations. Our staff is vaccinated, and we watch the Florida numbers daily. We are following CDC guidelines and will be requiring all performers at the festival to be vaccinated. And while no one knows exactly what pandemic challenges may face us in June, rest assured that we’re committed to making the festival as safe as possible.

I have been asked why we aren’t doing a virtual festival like AACTFest 2021. AACT used professional camera crews to record each show from various angles to give those stunning performances you saw on your screens. With an international festival, that is almost impossible—imagine trying to do that in 13 different countries.

Clearly, we must be creative to make this festival work, and we are doing just that. After all, if we in the theatre world can’t be creative and adaptive, who can?

We are planning some new things for 2022. For instance, we are incorporating the Whova phone app. For those of you who attended the national festival, you know how wonderful this app is for scheduling your time, as well as communication.

We also are working on safe social activities that will allow you to relax and spend time with theatre people from around the world.

If you have never attended an international festival because you are afraid you won’t understand the languages, you’ll be happy to know that we are working to make that easier. Plus, many shows have few or no spoken words. And, of course, remember that the language of theatre is universal. You will recognize the feelings, be stimulated by the visuals and sounds, and your heart will soar with them.

Please join us in Venice, Florida, June 20-26, 2022 for a Festival in Paradise!

Performing at aactWORLDFEST 2022

Armenia: The Yerevan State Puppet Theatre returns to the festival with two shows. The Wolf is an Armenian fairy tale brought to life through puppets, shadows, humans, music, and beautiful lighting. You will delight in the childish wonder you feel while watching this playful piece of theatre.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime is presented by permission from the author of the book, Mark Haddon. The Armenian adaptation of this popular British novel was translated from English to Armenian by one of the troupe members.

Additionally, there will be a collaborative educational opportunity for young people to learn the intricacies of puppetry directly from the company’s experts. Details will be announced soon.

Brazil: Award-winning puppeteer and musician Caio Stolai returns with a repeat performance of Circo Poeira (Dust Circus). This innovative production conveys joy, sadness, nervousness, and most other human emotions through the eyes of an old circus master recalling memories of days gone by (our cover photo). This one-man show was a standout in the 2010 festival.

Central African Republic: Fédération Centrafricaine de Théâtre presents Les Perroquets de Bangui performing Les

Czech Republic: V.O.D. Theatre will present Valerie and Her Week of Wonders. Based on Vitezslav Nezval's book by the same name, it was also made into a fantasy/horror movie. This stage version of a young woman's coming-of-age story is told through beautiful staging, lighting, music, and visual projections.

Egypt: East-Voice Group for Arts from Alexandria, Egypt, will perform The Seven Days, a black comedy that addresses colonialism and oppression rampant in parts of the Arab community.

United Kingdom: After wowing 2018 audiences with the romantic comedy Bump, Scrambled Egg Theatre Company returns with another hilarious comedy, A Man of No Importance. Through gibberish, impeccable comedic timing, brilliant music, and sound effects, you'll enter into the world of the spy.

France: Nez Nets et Cie brings us La Vie Rêvée De Nous (Life Dreams of Us). This charming, funny production will have you smiling from beginning to end. With characters who only communicate in gibberish, it's French clowning at its very best.

Georgia: Sighnaghi Theatre Company presents Scrolling Group of Actors. This production offers a performance style called Berikaoba, which we don't otherwise get to see in America. Berikaoba stems from an ancient folk tradition where actors donned animal masks and wandered the villages, performing for the public during an annual fertility festival. What was once celebrated throughout the Eastern European country of Georgia is now kept alive by only a handful of small villages.

continued on next page
Germany: The Wild Bunch returns from Berlin to present Der Kinoerzähler, which means “the movie teller.” Three actors, one saxophonist, and one drummer use music and video projections to enhance the story of a grandfather who saves himself from being considered dispensable. The play’s nine characters help illuminate topics of love, helplessness, seduction, passion, and guilt.

Israel: The Yoram Loewenstein Performing Arts Studio from Tel Aviv make their third festival appearance. This arts organization was established to help at-risk youth in Tel Aviv by providing them with an education in the arts, as well as basic studies. The students have an amazing success rate, with many becoming theatre professionals. This year, current students will showcase their talents in The Other Side.

Italy: Teatro delle Ombre brings us Clan MacBeth, based on a Shakespeare play. Guess which one! (Just don’t say it aloud in your theatre.) This is a dreamlike, surreal production, not a classical reduction of Shakespeare’s tragedy. It still focuses on the ambitious, passionate, cynical couple (a Scottish general and his lady) but adds a new character to the mix—a spooky, sinister Joker.

Poland: Zapadnia Theatre from Opole, Poland, returns, this time with Symbiosis. This new production is inspired by the novels, The Piano Teacher, by Elfriede Jelinek, and Heartsnatcher, by Boris Vian. The play explores the relationship between a mother and daughter, and as with previous shows from Zapadnia Theatre, the visuals will be a feast for the eyes.

Ukraine: Splash Theatre Company will join us from Kiev, offering a production of one of the most popular plays in Ukrainian literature: Stolen Happiness by Ivan Franko. This production tells its story with songs, dances, and costumes, inspired by Ukrainian folklore.

USA: Katori Hall’s The Mountaintop is a fictional depiction of Martin Luther King Jr.’s last night on earth. The Lexington Players’ production from New England won top honors at AACT’s 2021 National Festival.

Listed are productions scheduled at the print deadline. All performing companies and productions are subject to change. Visit venicetheatre.org/international/ for updates.
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All workshops
All after-glow parties

aactWORLDfest 2022 registration prices listed above are for AACT members. If you are not a member, add $75 to adult registration; $15 to student registration.

AACT Airline Discount Codes:
Delta Airlines
Sarasota Bradenton Airport (SRQ)
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Sarasota Bradenton Airport (SRQ)
Z Code: ZKDA, Agreement Code: 572012

VeniceTheatre.org/international is the best place to stay up-to-date and to learn more about all there is to do at aactWORLDfest 2022. Visit the site today to register for this fabulous event. You’ll have the time of your life at this Festival in Paradise. See you in June!

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AACT 2022 Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC)
Find solutions virtually with fellow theatremakers

Our annual Community Theatre Management Conference is almost here! CTMC is open to administrators of all kinds, so whether you’re a full-time professional manager, a part-time office administrator, a board member, or that dedicated volunteer who does it all, you are invited and welcome to attend one of the two virtual sessions.

This annual event offers a series of topic-specific discussions in various formats to provide participants with valuable insight, practical information, and new perspectives. We’ll have large-group roundtables, smaller breakout sessions, and conversations dedicated to volunteer and paid-staff specific issues.

A pre-conference questionnaire identifies and prioritizes topics for discussions, including COVID-specific challenges and traditional topics such as:

- Sales and Marketing
- Other Sources of Earned Income
- Fundraising and Development
- Event Planning
- Volunteers
- Season and Play Selections
- Classes, Education, and Outreach
- Box Office Operations
- Virtual Programming
- Board
- Zoom Board/Staff Meetings
- Safety
- Reopening
- and more!

This year’s CTMC is more flexible than ever with two virtual conferences. Choose the dates and time zone that work best for your schedule or attend both at a discounted rate! Visit aact.org/ctmc for details.

**East Coast Session: Friday, March 4 - Sunday, March 6**
Facilitated by Chad-Alan Carr, Founding Executive/Artistic Director at Gettysburg Community Theatre in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

**West Coast Session: Friday, March 18 – Sunday, March 20**
Facilitated by Dorinda Toner, Producing Artistic Director at Twilight Theater Company in Portland, Oregon

Register now at aact.org/ctmc

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CTMC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Scholarships
AACT will be providing two scholarships for each CTMC Virtual Conference session to support and mentor theatre makers of color. Visit aact.org/ctmc for details.

More information, detailed schedule, and registration at aact.org/ctmc
The AACT NewPlayFest was created to develop new original work and spark communication and excitement among community theatres. Over a two-year period, playwrights submit their play to AACT for consideration, and winning scripts receive a world-premiere. At the end of the festival, all of the winning plays from the 2019-2020 cycle were published in this anthology.

Included Titles:

On Pine Knoll Street  
By Mark Cornell

Casserole  
By Pamela Harbaugh

Shattering  
By Pat Montley

Goat Song Revel  
By Dan Borengasser

The Cayuga Canal Girls  
By Laura King

Proprioception  
By Marilyn Millstone

Learn more at: dramaticpublishing.com/aact-vol-4
The Top 10 Reasons to Attend TEAMS 2022

The 2022 TEAMS Conference is just around the corner—July 29-31. We’re looking forward to meeting in-person at the beautiful Hale Centre Theatre in Salt Lake City, Utah, and hope you and your team will join us.

TEAMS is a high-performance educational conference that offers tracks in
- Technical Theatre
- Educational Programming
- Artistic Direction/Vision
- Marketing
- Stage Management

Come by yourself or get even more out of the conference by putting together a team—the five tracks will be held simultaneously, so participants can share rides and rooms. All registrants select the track that best suits their individual needs.

10. The Hale Centre Theatre
For those who haven’t seen this beautiful theatre center (and even those who have), a tour is the perfect way to kick off the event. The complex houses two theatres, including the 911-seat Young Living Centre Stage, considered one of the most technological theatrical stages in the world. TEAMS participants have the option of seeing *Singin’ in the Rain* or *Silent Sky* (register early to receive a discount).

9. Live & In-Person
We’ve all done a great job of adjusting to the ever-changing demands of COVID-19. While there are benefits to virtual programming (as we’ve learned and embraced with CTMC), we are looking forward to being together again in-person for TEAMS. Catch up with your colleagues from across the country and meet new peers at the same time!

8. Benefits Theatres of All Sizes
Theatres of all sizes are welcome and encouraged to attend. From the organization that’s just starting out, to the theatre with a staff of twenty, you’re sure to find ideas, support, and the comfort of a colleague who’s been there.

7. Share Your Knowledge
As much as this is an opportunity to learn and grow, there’s nothing wrong with celebrating your successes, too. Your experiences may be just the thing to help another organization solve their latest problem or discover a new opportunity.

6. Discussions Tailored to Your Group
We want you to get as much out of this as possible. That’s why the conversations are often driven by the experiences and knowledge of people in the room. Using pre-conference surveys and skilled facilitators, we make sure we spend time on what matters to you.

5. “Exceeded Expectations”
Don’t take our word for it; listen to what past participants had to say: “Feeling SO inspired!” “Wonderful, welcoming, engaging, and flexible,” and “we covered so much ground!” Overall, participants say TEAMS exceeded their expectations.

4. Multiply Your Skills—Together
Because TEAMS is five unique conferences rolled into one, you and your team can attend together, participate in different tracks, and return to your organization with twice (or more) the gain. We even offer a discount for team registration!

3. Five Fantastic Facilitators
Regardless of which track you choose to attend, you’re in good hands. Our five professionals know what they’re talking about; they have the experience and proven track records to prove it. Learn more about the facilitators at aact.org/teams.

2. Renewed Enthusiasm
The past two years have challenged us all in unprecedented ways, leaving many of us exhausted and burned out. But TEAMS has a history of sending participants home feeling inspired and with a new enthusiasm for our day-to-day.

1. Community
If you’ve attended any of AACT’s educational conferences, you know that feeling of community you can’t find anywhere else. If you haven’t attended any of our conferences, what are you waiting for? We promise you’ll learn, grow, and connect, alongside new and lifelong friends and colleagues.
Registration

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Registration includes all materials, continental breakfast, snacks, Saturday lunch.

Registration, schedule, facilitators, hotel information, airline discounts, and additional information at aact.org/teams

Bonus Offer: Regularly priced at $55, participants will receive $25 discounted tickets to see the Hale Centre Theatre production of Singing in the Rain and/or Silent Sky. Tickets available for Saturday night, July 30, and for the evening performances before the conference, Thursday, July 28.

- Singing in the Rain - Considered by many as the greatest movie musical of all time, the stage version retains the film’s hilarious situations, snappy dialogue, and hit-parade score of Hollywood standards.
- Silent Sky - An astonishing, true story! In the early 1900's... Henrietta Leavitt, a meticulous mathematician, is hired by the Harvard Observatory to be a human calculator. Struggling with increasing hearing loss, she calculates the distance between sound waves, which leads her to a groundbreaking discovery—she can deduce the distance between planets and stars using her formula.

The TEAMS Marketing Track, meeting at the Hale Centre in 2019, discusses how to build audiences, and to use marketing and branding in today’s changing social media world.
Questions, Answers, and New Perspectives
National Community Theatre Directors Conference in San Antonio

Susan Goes

This past November, I joined more than 80 other community theatre leaders from across the country for the AACT National Directors Conference, in San Antonio, Texas. Formerly held in Madison, Wisconsin, every two years this amazing gathering provides an opportunity for full-time paid staff of AACT-member theatres to share stories, resources, and inspiration. This year’s gathering was especially poignant given the pandemic challenges we’ve all faced, and the fact that this occasion marked the first time most of us had seen our AACT friends in person since March 2020. It was wonderful to be together!

This marked my fourth National Directors Conference and, once again, I was struck by how much we all have in common, even though our theatres may differ in many ways. Our common love for theatre creates strong rapport, whether we have known one another for 20 years or have just met.

As AACT members, we believe that theatre changes lives, and enriches communities. I believe this creed has only been strengthened by the pandemic, and indeed 68% of those at the San Antonio conference said they also believe their theatres are better than before. During the COVID-induced interruption to the status quo, we have put this time of forced introspection to good use, reimagining more effective ways to serve our communities in the future.

Big and Small, Old and New

While our shared love for theatre united us, our differences provided the fuel for stimulating discussions throughout the conference. AACT serves theatres from Hawaii to Florida, from large urban cities to small rural communities. There were some theatres in the group who have passed their 100th birthday, while others had been founded in the last five years. Our operating budgets ranged from under $100,000 to over $20 million, with 40% of those present in the $1 million budget category. Similarly, staff sizes ranged from one to more than 20, with more than 50% reporting a 1-5 employee range. Finally, the difference in regional approaches to the pandemic created another opportunity for reflection and learning. All combined, these variations triggered lively conversations throughout the weekend.

The first couple of times I attended the conference, my key takeaways were pragmatic ones—software tools to investigate, ticket-pricing strategies to consider, and new ideas for community partnerships, among other things. And for those attendees looking for such practical support, there were ideas in abundance at the San Antonio conference.

However, I came to the 2021 gathering yearning for a deeper kind of inspiration, and over the course of our weekend together, three themes emerged for me: 1) Tell the right stories; 2) Invest in your people; and 3) Take care of yourself.
Telling the Right Stories

A popular feature of past conferences has been the sharing of “Hits and Misses”—shows that had done well for us, or not been as successful as we had anticipated. In previous years, that discussion was mostly centered around ticket sales, and the focus was on identifying titles that might boost future bottom lines.

The conversation in November 2021 played out quite differently and was far more nuanced.

Rather than focusing on finding our next hit, we concentrated on much deeper questions. Do the stories we share on our stage speak to the community we serve? Which stories are most important to tell right now? Whose voices are being heard? Are we providing opportunities for performers of diverse ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds to participate? If not, what are the barriers to participation, and how do we build bridges to encourage new talent?

The responses to these questions are likely different for each theatre, and that was the point. We learned that it is far less important to have clear answers to each of those questions than it is to keep asking those questions with an open mind and a kind heart. So, the “right stories” to tell on stage in Paducah, Kentucky, will be different from the “right stories” to share in Salt Lake City, Utah. And that speaks to the beauty of community theatre: We can program seasons in response to what our audiences want to see—and we can gently stretch our audiences (and ourselves as theatre-makers) by including some not-yet-familiar works, representing more diverse voices.

Investing in Your People

To be able to tell the right stories, we need to have the right people in place, and that was a second theme of this year’s conference: Invest in your people. Fortunately, most theatres represented at the conference had found creative ways to keep their staffs employed throughout 2020 and 2021, with 78% reporting the same level of staffing as March 2020.

Throughout the weekend we discussed all kinds of ways to promote a healthy work environment for our paid staff and volunteers. These include recruiting, hiring, and training new staff; volunteer supervision and recognition; compensation strategies; and leadership succession. My favorite creative morale-building idea came from Venice Theatre, which periodically declares a “S’mores Day” in their parking lot as a way to promote staff and volunteer comradery.

Taking Care of Yourself

We began our weekend-long conversation by acknowledging the extreme challenges we’ve faced in the last few years. I quickly realized that I was not alone in feeling exhausted by the pandemic and the need to reinvent all our operating procedures continued on next page
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with public health considerations in mind. We all need to find ways to take care of ourselves, and I found that attending this AACT conference, and reconnecting with other community theatre people, was the best form of self-care I could imagine.

So, to all my AACT colleagues who attended this year’s conference, thank you for your stories that reminded me of the joy and importance of live theatre. I am so grateful for our time together, and for the reminder that, to quote Stephen Sondheim, “no one is alone.”

Information on the 2023 conference will be available soon on the AACT website. For those who have not yet taken part in one of AACT’s wonderful educational conferences, I encourage you to consider this one—or any of the other conferences that fit your needs—and reserve the dates on your calendar. You will be so glad you did!

Susan Goes has served as Executive Director of Cottage Theatre, in Cottage Grove, Oregon, since 2007. She began her career in the development department of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and has worked with a variety of arts and nonprofit organizations, in both staff and board capacities. She holds a Master’s in Arts Administration from the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, and a B.A. from Carleton College in Minnesota.

Can’t wait until 2023? Join us March 4-6 and/or March 18-20, 2022 for the virtual Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC). For more information, visit aact.org/ctmc

AACT Virtual CTMC 2021 was a great learning experience and lots of fun for all participants. Share your tales of managing your theatre company and network with fellow theatre makers at the 2022 Virtual conferences.
New AACT Staff Members

AACT has added two staff members to its national team.

Mary Jo DeNolf is serving as AACT Festivals/Engagement Coordinator, following the recent retirement of Ron Ziegler. She will work with state and regional festivals and participating theatre companies throughout the AACTFest cycle, including troupes performing as National Companies at the AACTFest National Festival. Mary Jo has been active in AACT for several years. She was Production Manager for Virtual AACTFest 2021, Production Manager at AACTFest 2019 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and AACTFest 2017 in Rochester, Minnesota. She served for 22 years as the Director of Operations and Volunteers at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She also worked on the theatre’s production teams as Stage Manager and Properties Designer, and, as she says, just about every other backstage job there is. When not immersed in the theatre world, Mary Jo is an outdoor enthusiast hiking, camping, kayaking, and sailing with her husband Steve.

David A. VanCleave is Education Coordinator, working to advance educational opportunities offered by AACT. He follows Kathy Pingel and Ron Ziegler, who recently retired from their positions with AACT.

David has been involved in community theatre since elementary school as an actor, stage manager, director, dramaturge, designer, and educator. He served as Executive Artistic Director at Des Moines Young Artists’ Theatre from 2014-2020 and is currently co-director of HOPE! Drama Troupe at the Des Moines Playhouse.

David earned his B.F.A. in Theatre Arts/Directing from The Theatre School at DePaul University, where his credits include Closer (Director), Spinning Into Butter (Stage Manager), Flow My Tears the Policeman Said (Dramaturge), and the world premiere of The Death of Gaia Divine (Director). For Des Moines Playhouse, he has directed Matilda, Cabaret, and The Laramie Project, as well as productions for Des Moines Onstage, Noce, Des Moines Young Artists’ Theatre, and more.

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AACT Call for Board Nominations - Volunteer or Suggest!

The AACT Nominating Committee needs your help to identify persons who would be good candidates to serve on the AACT Board. If you are interested and/or know persons you would like to see serve, visit aact.org/nominations.

Please submit your suggestions by March 20th.

The role of the Board Member at Large is to provide leadership, direction, and oversight to AACT through support, development, and review of policies and goals for the Association.

For 2022-2023, seven Members at Large will be elected to the board from slate of nominees submitted by the Nominations Committee. Meeting this spring, the Nominations Committee will make recommendations to the AACT Board of Directors. The board will cast votes for those on the ballot in April and the new board members will be installed at the Summer Board Meeting scheduled to be held June 24-25, during aactWORLDFEST 2022 in Venice, Florida.

Look for the election results in the July/August 2022 Spotlight.

For more information on the structure, responsibilities, and requirements of the board, please read the AACT Bylaws and Operational Guidelines. Links to these documents can be found at aact.org/nominations.

Nominees should be aware of their nomination and be willing and able to serve if elected. ♦

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Restructured and refocused, the 2022 National Arts Action Summit (NAAS) will be held virtually on March 28-30. Now in its 35th year, the Summit is a multi-day event sponsored by Americans for the Arts that brings together arts advocates from across the country to discuss federal arts advocacy and learn the best advocacy strategies to influence national change.

To make the Summit more accessible and impactful, this year, for the first time, there will be no individual registration fee. There also will be no partnership fee, which means that any organization can participate in the legislative planning sessions prior to the Summit.

In addition, Summit content has been refocused to help advocates be better prepared to speak to decision-makers. This is important, say event planners, since grassroots advocates have been, and can be, immediately effective at making appropriations requests to their members of Congress and requesting their co-sponsorship of active legislation.

Since this sort of advocacy is best leveraged in the spring—in line with the Congressional schedule—this year’s Summit will focus on the annual appropriations process and pending creative workforce legislation. Reducing the number of issues presented at the Summit will ensure policy leaders and attendees alike can develop a more compelling and straightforward advocacy strategy that will help increase resources for underrepresented and marginalized communities in the creative sector.

For more information on the Summit and how to register, go to aact.org/summit.

Reducing the legislative scope of the National Arts Action Summit in March doesn’t mean that Americans for the Arts is ignoring issues like arts and health, tax policy, or technology issues. In fact, this year it will host “a new federal policy gathering that will bring together more stakeholders from across the policy spectrum to craft and develop the federal policy issues that we’re familiar with, and consider new policies that we’ve overlooked, that we can help raise up,” explains Nolen V. Bivens, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts.

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The first read of a new play becomes a crime scene when one of the participants unexpectedly drops dead. In a room filled with old vendettas, jilted lovers, blackmail victims and one loony former child star, it’s anyone’s guess who the killer is, who was the intended victim and who, if anyone, will save the day!

MURDER FARCE COMEDY MYSTERY

Reading Between the Lies

By Kelly Barrett-Gibson

The first read of a new play becomes a crime scene when one of the participants unexpectedly drops dead. In a room filled with old vendettas, jilted lovers, blackmail victims and one loony former child star, it’s anyone’s guess who the killer is, who was the intended victim and who, if anyone, will save the day!
AACT YouthFest is not a competition, but rather a celebration of Youth Theatre! Performances will be adjudicated, with opportunities for individual and group awards. Don't delay; applications are due **June 15**! Our early deadline is designed to give your group maximum time for project grant-writing and other fundraising opportunities.

AACTFest 2023 will also include a Youth Theatre Conference, a customized educational opportunity without the performance aspect of YouthFest.

We look forward to hearing from you soon! Interested or have questions? Email AACT YouthFest 2023 Chair, Chad-Alan Carr at Chad@GettysburgCommunityTheatre.org. ♦

AACT YouthFest 2023 is made possible by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation.

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**AACT Youth Theatre Conference 2023**

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

The focus will be on cultivating youth who aspire to be leaders within the art community and providing advanced training in the theatre arts. Participants will be exposed to a line-up of powerful theatre performances from around the country, engage in educational workshops, receive mentoring and shadowing from arts professionals, and take part in activities that are challenging and fun!

The conference is open to ages 12-18. Upon registering, participants will receive a survey to help us cater their individual schedule to their interests.

Be on the look-out for more information! Registration will be available soon and space is limited! ♦
As our theatres continue to reopen, reprioritize, and recover from pandemic pressures and often fluctuating policies, peer networking is more important than ever. AACT Roundtables excel in offering focused online discussions that address issues, identify solutions, celebrate successes, and lend support during these unprecedented times. Each Roundtable features a panel of community theatre peers, addressing the top four or five topics suggested by the attendees.

Our Roundtable series is one of AACT’s most popular programs because it provides:

- **A Wealth of Information.** Get answers to the questions you want to ask, valuable input and advice from fellow community theatre people.
- **Multiple Experts.** Discussions feature a group of panelists, providing you with a variety of experiences, views, and insights into the topic being discussed.
- **Shared Knowledge.** Roundtable sessions provide in-depth sharing of knowledge and hands-on experience from many perspectives.
- **Broad-Based Perspectives.** Panel members are selected from community theatres from all over the U.S.
- **Exclusive Content.** AACT Roundtables are offered to AACT members only.

**Upcoming Roundtables**

**March 15**  
**Corporate Sponsorship**  
A look at the relationship with corporate sponsors—from first date through honeymoon.

**April 19**  
**Volunteer Management**  
Like many aspects of our industry, volunteer recruitment and management has changed over the past two years. Learn how to identify the right volunteer and keep them coming back.

You’ll find more information, including panelists for each Roundtable and registration details, at aact.org/listings. You’ll also learn about upcoming Roundtables as they are announced. Roundtables are recorded and made available after their live presentation, usually within 24 hours.

**Become a Panelist!**

What makes AACT Roundtables so dynamic is the opportunity they offer to hear from a variety of voices and viewpoints, without boundaries. If you would like to serve on one of the panels, AACT invites you to apply. Your experience and knowledge are welcome, whether for a theatre with paid staff, or one staffed entirely by volunteers. Acceptance is on a rolling basis. To volunteer, submit the online form at aact.org/panelist

**AACT Roundtables are sponsored in part by Ludus, powering theatres’ ticketing, marketing, and fundraising needs.**
W e’re officially two years into the COVID-19 pandemic and theatres everywhere seem to have perfected the art of being flexible. We adapted our programming, added and adjusted protocols, learned new technology, and developed new ways to tell stories. Then we did it again. And again. We learned that with COVID, the only constant is change.

That’s been especially true with the Omicron variant. Across our industry, productions were rescheduled, tickets refunded, and roles recast. Even Broadway theatres were forced to readjust their standard casting procedures, after exhausting their swings and understudies. *The Lion King*’s Young Simba alternate performed as Young Nala, script-in-hand. *Thoughts of a Colored Man*’s playwright stepped into a leading role. *Come From Away* filled two-thirds of its cast with swings, former cast members, and one actor from the national tour.

In Omicron’s first month, virtually every Broadway production canceled performances. Some shows announced they’d return in the spring, while several others were forced to close entirely. That number would certainly be higher if it wasn’t for the talented swings and understudies.

So why aren’t they more common practice in community theatre? Is it time to reevaluate?

“We haven’t stopped reevaluating,” joked Katy Merriman, artistic director of Des Moines Playhouse. “When we started [performing indoors again], we performed shows in rep. The thought was, if someone tests positive from one show, we’d be prepared to go with the other, instead.”

The two productions rehearsed on opposite sides of the building to avoid possible exposure between the two productions. This approach worked well for the Playhouse, but as COVID cases continued to drop and vaccinations increased, the company returned to one show at a time. Thanks to consistent reevaluating of its safety policies, the Playhouse has produced eight indoor shows since September 2021 (including the AACT NewPlayFest World Premiere of *Escaping the Labryinth* by Thomas S. Hischak).

It wasn’t always smooth sailing, especially with the big musicals. Both *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music* saw actors missing performances due to non–COVID illnesses. In both cases, seasoned performers were called in and gave stellar performances, script-in-hand.

“We definitely would have handled things differently if they were related to COVID,” Merriman explained. “I think ultimately, these past few years have changed the way the Playhouse looks at illness in general. That’s a good thing.”

Community theatres often reject the notion of understudies out of respect for the volunteer. Is it fair or reasonable to expect them to learn a role they likely won’t perform? How do you adequately prepare them without jeopardizing the rest of your process or doubling the work? How do we simultaneously serve the volunteer and the story?

“We’ve started double-casting certain roles,” Merriman added. “Some von Trapp children were double-cast. We plan on casting two Pippi Longstockings, two Matildas....”

E ven the theatre’s non-musicals are taking extra precaution. *Charlotte’s Web* added two extra ensemble members, one male-identifying adult and one female-identifying youth, who will be prepared to cover any role at any time.

“They’re both excited about this unique training experience, Merriman said. “If we had swings who were not part of the regularly performing cast, I would want to pay them a stipend. But in this case, they are performing in each show, and they also get a strong educational experience in learning another track.”

We’ve all heard the one about the leading player who

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**Spotlight on Swings**

*How to Serve the Story and Your Volunteers*

David A. VanCleave, AACT Education Coordinator

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**KNOW THE TERMS**

 ✓ **understudy**: a performer cast in the ensemble of a musical (or minor role in a play) who is responsible for covering a lead and/or supporting role(s)

 ✓ **swing**: an off-stage performer responsible for covering any number of ensemble tracks.

 ✓ **track**: everything an individual ensemble member does in the show, including all the characters, choreography, blocking, costume changes, props, backstage traffic, and more. Each member of the ensemble has a unique track.

 ✓ **standby**: an off-stage performer whose sole responsibility is to cover the lead (usually a star) in a production.
powered through the flu to finish their big dance number, only to immediately collapse backstage. These stories are heroic tales; we tell them with great pride, “the show must go on!” But if we truly serve our volunteers, shouldn’t that also include their health and well-being?

Maui OnStage re-evaluated their casting strategies after losing several actors to mandatory quarantine and non-COVID illness during rehearsals last summer. Its October production of Clue (a collaboration with ProArts Playhouse) featured three additional actors, specifically cast as swings. According to Executive Director Luana Whitford-Mitchell, it was the right decision.

“We went into pre-production knowing we’d be using swings and worked really hard to incorporate them in every part of the process, starting with the table read.”

As a thank-you for their time and commitment, each swing was given a performance. These casting changes were announced from the beginning, including all marketing and social media. “This ensured that no one was surprised or had their feelings hurt,” Whitford-Mitchell noted. “In fact, the cast member [who stepped out for the swing] would watch the show from the designated ‘swing seating’ in the house. The swing’s family and friends were there. It was like the fan clubs all showed up! It was great!”

Springfield Little Theatre’s production of Steel Magnolias is taking yet another approach. After a tremendous turnout at auditions and the longest callbacks in memory, the company decided to double-cast the production. As Executive Director Beth Domann recalled, “The idea actually came from Jessica Bower [the wife of Jamie Bower, SLT’s Technical Director]. We had thought about understudies, but once we saw all that talent, we just knew we had to double-cast it.”

Spotlight on Swings  continued from page 25

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Rather than framing the result in terms of extra work, the SLT team is choosing to focus on the extra fun this approach provides.

“We have a ‘Blush Cast’ and a ‘Bashful Cast’” Domann explained. The names are a reference to the script, of course, but they’re also a fun way to distinguish the casts without inadvertently creating a sense of hierarchy. Identifying the casts as “Cast A” and “Cast B” is the simplest approach, but it often sends the message that one cast is superior to the other. But, as Domann said, “We don’t want any of that,” instead making it clear that “we’re having fun, and both casts are going to be outstanding.”

The theatre has added performances to ensure each cast has equal opportunities. “We’re also doing something a little crazy,” Domann said. “We’ve added what we’re calling the ‘Wild Card’ show, where we’ll mix up the two casts by drawing names at random.”

We’ve all learned that there is no “right answer” in times of COVID. Infection rates, government mandates, and general attitudes towards the virus change daily, and are vastly different from state to state. But if we can take extra steps to learn Zoom and to navigate the labyrinth of emergency federal relief funds, shouldn’t we also take some time to protect our volunteers and uphold our stories? That is, after all, why we do what we do.

UPCOMING ROUNDTABLE

An AACT Roundtable will be added to discuss this topic in more depth, and to include additional voices. If you’re interested in participating on the panel for this event, visit aact.org/panelist

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Spotlight Award Honors Mary Sue Weeks

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

The Lincoln County Community Theater (LCCT), in Damariscotta, Maine, has honored Mary Sue Weeks of Bremen, Maine, with the AACT Spotlight Award for her contributions to the artistic life of the theatre.

An accomplished scenic artist, Mary Sue has shared her considerable talents with the company for over a decade. John Mulcahy, LCCT Production Supervisor, says “From the moment she walked through the door of our theatre, we have not mounted a production that has not been blessed with Mary Sue’s incredible skills, tireless work ethic, and friendly demeanor.”

He recalls that “when we wanted to show a giant IBM Selectric typewriter on the upstage drop for Nine to Five—a little research and it was done. Paint a drop and false proscenium in the style of Rousseau for Iolanthe?—she mastered it.”

Weeks plays a particularly important role in brainstorming discussions in the early stages of the design process, which Mulcahy says “never seems to be about individual egos colliding, but rather about comrades weighing different ideas and happily arriving at the best plan for moving ahead. Every community theatre should be as lucky as we are to have someone like Mary Sue Weeks among its dedicated volunteers.”

Mary Sue Weeks

For more information about these and other plays by the author: www.thomashischak.com

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TRW Plays, the newly formed play-licensing division of Theatrical Rights Worldwide, has announced the addition of Craig Pospisil to its staff. Bringing over 30 years of licensing experience, Craig will serve as Vice-President of TRW Plays, working alongside Executive Director Lysna Marzani.

“I’m very excited to join TRW and help build this new play publishing and licensing division,” Craig says. “There’s so much potential for growth for this catalogue and it will be an exciting challenge to help find and champion new plays from both new voices and experienced ones.”

In addition to his years of experience in theatrical licensing, Craig is a multi award-winning playwright and filmmaker. He is the author of the full-length plays Months on End, The Dunes, Life is Short, Somewhere in Between, and more than 50 one-act and short plays. His work has been published by Applause, Dramatists Play Service, Heineman, Playscripts, Smith&Kraus and Vintage, and seen on stages around the U.S. and in two dozen countries on six continents. He graduated from Wesleyan University, received his Master’s from New York University, and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. A born-and-bred New Yorker, he lives in Brooklyn with his wife, Bloomberg TV anchor Alix Steel and their daughter.

Steve Spiegel, Owner/CEO, of TRW notes that “Craig has lived the world of play licensing and joins TRW Plays as one the most highly recognized and respected executives in the industry. He brings with him an unmatched level of knowledge, relationships and experience.”

Cloverdale Playhouse in Montgomery, Alabama, has announced two new hires. Tara Fenn is the company’s new Managing Director, after having been involved as a volunteer with the playhouse since its inaugural year. Recipient of a B.A. in Communication and Theatre from Auburn University at Montgomery, Tara’s experience in the River Region has involved productions at Theatre AUM, Cloverdale Playhouse, Prattville’s Way Off Broadway Theatre, and the Wetumpka Depot. She has been a director, actor, singer, teacher, costumer, stitcher, board member, production team member, front of house manager, props master, fundraiser, and everything in between. She is also a founding member of AUM’s all-female a cappella group, AUMcappella.

Sam Wooten is the Cloverdale Playhouse’s new Artistic Director. He has been an actor, writer, director, and producer of theatre in Montgomery. Raised in Marietta, Georgia, Sam’s early interest in theatre led to years with Atlanta-area theatres and their educational and children’s programs. After a brief stint pursuing film and television opportunities in L.A. he returned to earn his B.A. in Theatre from the University of Georgia, an M.F.A. in Drama from Indiana University, and a certification from the Stage Internazionale Di Commedia dell’Arte in Reggio Emilia, Italy. In Chicago, Sam started his own theatre company, focusing on new and original works. In Montgomery, he has served as a board member for the Cloverdale Playhouse since its founding. Most important, he says, is his role as a spouse to Emily, and as a parent to Miriam and Henry.

Way Off Broadway Theatre, and the Wetumpka Depot. She has been a director, actor, singer, teacher, costumer, stitcher, board member, production team member, front of house manager, props master, fundraiser, and everything in between. She is
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Please consider including the American Association of Community Theatre in your legacy plans through a will, trust, life insurance gift, or other legacy gift. Through these special gifts, friends like you are able to sustain AACT’s mission and provide learning experiences for AACT-member companies participating in AACTFest national festivals.

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

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Artie's Advocacy Tip

Advocate for the Arts. Make your voice heard!

Join Americans for the Arts’ 2022 National Arts Summit (NAAS) virtually on March 28-30. For the first time, there will be no individual registration fee! Join AACT and fellow artists to learn the best advocacy strategies to influence change.

See the article in this Spotlight, page 21.

For more information on the Summit and how to register, go to aact.org/summit.

Join Us for AACT Online Roundtables

AACT is hosting online roundtables for all AACT members!

AACT Roundtables provide members with a forum for sharing experiences, ideas, concerns, and solutions.

Join these informative sessions and gain insight on a variety of topics with theatre professionals from around the country.

See the information on page 24, and visit aact.org/listings to schedule your 2022 AACT virtual roundtables.

AACT Roundtables are sponsored in part by Ludus, powering theatres’ ticketing, marketing, and fundraising needs.

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AACT Web Power

Need help with a production or administrative question? AACT’s Resource Roster is there to help you find the answers you need. Submit your question online at aact.org/roster and AACT’s Resource Roster Coordinator will match you with an AACT member who is experienced in the topic you’ve indicated. It’s networking at its best.

Note: If you are looking for something very specific, such as a prop, sample documents, or references for consultants, it may be better to use AACTList, our email discussion group, so that you can reach multiple people with a single post. [aact.org/aactlist].

The Resource Roster is composed of AACT members who have volunteered their time and skills to assist with your theatrical needs. If you would like to volunteer your expertise to the Resource Roster, contact Coordinator Lynn Nelson at lynn_nelson@hotmail.com. Along with your name and contact information, include the specific skill or knowledge you can provide to other AACT members.

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

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

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When the Lights Are Bright Again

Created by Andrew Norlen
Photography by Matthew Murphy
Applause Books

It began as an artist’s desperate desire to express himself inside a worldwide pandemic, but in one year’s time it has grown into a theatre industry and country-wide outlet for healing, grief, justice, and hope in the theatre community.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed what a world without live performance looks and feels like. This book captures a small fraction of the powerful and transcendent internal heartbeat that never went away within the theatre community. When the Lights Are Bright Again immortalizes the stories, struggles, and successes of an industry that was the first to be shut down and one of the last to return.

Andrew Norlen weaves more than 200 letters from Broadway theatre veterans, devout theatregoers, teenage dreamers aspiring for their day in the spotlight, long-time ushers, designers, creatives, and countless other arts workers with a brand-new, breathtaking photo series by Broadway photographer Matthew Murphy.

Not only has the creation of this book allowed the theatre community to grieve and express themselves in a new way, but for every copy purchased, a portion of the profits will directly benefit The Actors Fund. This book will continue to help support arts workers to thrive and receive financial stability for decades to come with every copy sold.

When The Lights Are Bright Again is a love letter to the arts community and every theatregoer, but, above all else, it is a meditation on the human experience. There is something for every broken, tired, and angry soul inside this book: hope.

Available at the AACT Bookstore: aact.org/books

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Eligibility – Any US resident

Full-length plays only (English, no musicals)

Non-published, previous non-equity productions are okay

Fee of $30 per entry
No limit per playwright

Award: $500 plus option for production in June 2022
Second and third place winners may receive options for future productions

Deadline for submissions is midnight April 21, 2022 (Central Daylight Time)

Electronic submission preferred, but hard copy also possible

Details and application: theatrerocks.com

Submission and Questions: DirectorBillRhoten@gmail.com

Emerging Playwrights Award
Urban Stages
New York City

Full-length plays only. Step 1 is a staged reading. Out of hundreds of submissions a year, 15-20 plays are selected for readings. From those, 1-3 plays annually go on to the workshopping phase. Workshops are meant to prepare a play for Urban Stages Off-Broadway stage. From workshops, 1-2 plays are selected for full productions, complete with a playwright’s contract and compensation (separate from the award).

Plays may have been developed or produced elsewhere, but never produced in New York City.

No deadline, submissions are accepted year-round.
It usually takes up to six months to read and process a script.

No submission fee.

Award: $500 Emerging Playwright Award

Mail submission preferred:
Urban Stages
555 Eighth Avenue, RM 1800
New York, NY 10018
Details: urbanstages.org/submissions/
### Events Calendar

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<th>What/Who</th>
<th>Where</th>
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<td>CTMC 2022 East Coast Session</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>817-732-3177 aact.org/ctmc</td>
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<td>Mar 9-13</td>
<td>SETC 2022</td>
<td>TN Memphis</td>
<td>336-265-6148 setc.org</td>
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<td>Mar 15</td>
<td>AACT Roundtable: Corporate Sponsorship</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
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<td>OCTAFest</td>
<td>OK Weatherford</td>
<td>405-840-0788 oktheatre.org/octafest</td>
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<td>Mar 18-20</td>
<td>CTMC 2022 West Coast Session</td>
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<td>Mar 22 - Apr 10</td>
<td>AACT NewPlayFest World Premiere  &lt;br&gt; The Cafe Mocha Murders</td>
<td>CA Oakhurst</td>
<td>559-683-7112 goldenchaintheatre.org</td>
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<td>Mar 28-30</td>
<td>National Arts Action Summit</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>202-371-2830 aact.org/summit</td>
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<td>Mar 31-Apr 3</td>
<td>South West Theatre Conference 2022</td>
<td>TX Kerrville</td>
<td>facebook.com/SouthWestTheatreConference</td>
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<td>April 19</td>
<td>AACT Roundtable: Volunteer Management</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>817-732-3177 aact.org/listings</td>
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For dates further ahead, check the website: aact.org/calendar

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**Advertise in Spotlight**
Reach a perfect audience for all things theatrical.

Contact Darlene DeLorenzo darlene@aact.org 512-267-4509
The multi award-winning show is one of the world’s most irresistible family musicals. Bring the magic — including the songs that have become pop and musical theatre favorites — to your stage: concordsho.ws/Joseph.
2022 Community Theatre Management Conference

Take away new solutions to your theatre’s challenges through shared experiences.

This educational gathering brings together administrators from all levels of theatre—from full-time professional managers, board members, part-time administrators, to volunteers. Learning is through a series of intensive, topic-specific, roundtable discussions with participants sharing experiences. There will be a blend of traditional CTMC topics and those that have arisen with reopening after the challenges of COVID-19.

The CTMC conferences will be held VIRTUALLY. There are no travel/housing expenses.

Enroll in the time zone that best suits your ability to participate fully.

East Coast Session
March 4 - 6

West Coast Session
March 18 - 20

Register at aact.org/ctmc or call 817-732-3177

CTMC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Scholarships
AACT will be providing two scholarships for each CTMC Virtual Conference session to support and mentor theatre makers of color. Visit aact.org/ctmc for details.

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