

FALL 2023 \$5.00

spotlight

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

IN THIS ISSUE

AACTFest 2023 Companies and Awards

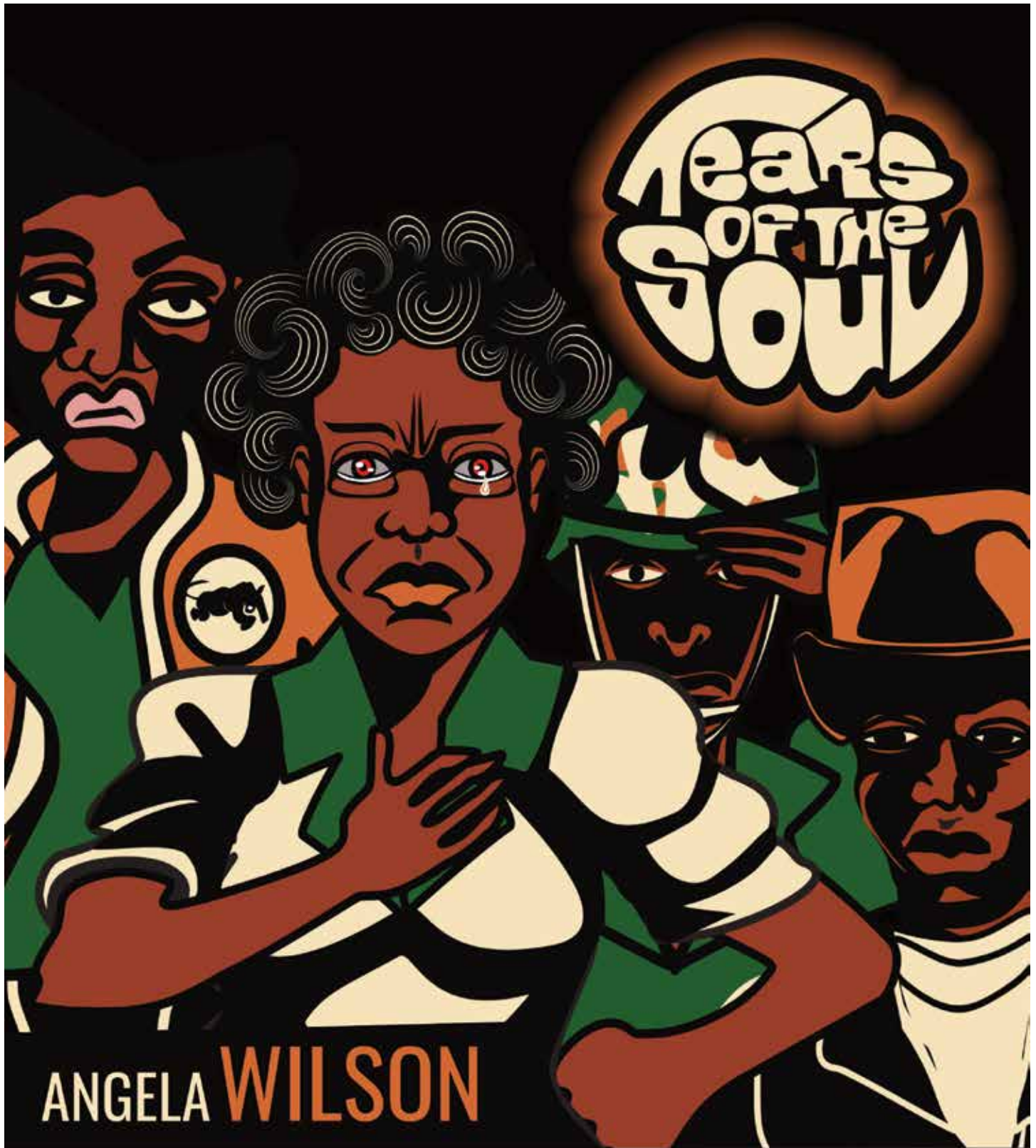
National Directors Conference

AACT New PlayFest 2024

Top Ten Most-Produced Shows

Mobile Sensory Theatre





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President's Letter

Kristi Quinn
AACT President

Theatre in some form has been part of my life since I was a stage-struck girl. It has never mattered to me that I did not have a huge talent. What mattered was that I could share the joy with those who *did*. Or help educate an audience. Or guide students toward heights greater than I could achieve myself.

Fortunately, I am not the only one who feels this way—made obvious at AACTFest 2023 in Louisville this June. From the keynote speaker and workshops, to the vendors and networking opportunities, to the fantastic performances, it was fabulous!

AACT staff were tireless in their quest to make the festival a success. Bob Frame, Eugene Irby, JR Bornemann, and John Eppert spent an immense amount of time in the wings during performances. Everyone who worked on educational opportunities—including Chad Alan Carr with the Community Theatre Management Conference—shared their expertise with us. And there are many, many more like them. Thank you, each and every one of you.

Bringing this marvelous event to fruition is a huge undertaking. State and regional festivals involve countless unsung volunteers who work tirelessly—casts, crews, technicians all giving their time and money to make the AACTFest process work so well.

Why do they do it? Because their efforts make a real difference in people's lives.

During AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, I was on my way back to my hotel room in a very crowded elevator. A woman entered and looked at several of us AACTFest attendees and asked, "You do theatre, right?"

We all smiled and said, yes, we did.

Quite unexpectedly, she said, "Thank you, thank you all!"

Strange, I thought. Why would she be thanking a group from a community theatre festival? I soon found out.

As individuals cycled off the elevator, I continued with her up to the top floor and then back down as she told her story. Community theatre had saved her son's life, she said. He was autistic and had been non-verbal for many years. Then she heard about a local community theatre program designed for special needs youth, and decided to enroll her son. To her delight (and his), he blossomed in the program and loved being on stage, especially singing. She ended her story by showing me a video on her phone of him in a performance. She was proud and happy, but most of all, grateful. Because of community theatre.

And that, my dear friends, is an answer to the "why." It is just one of the myriad of ways that community theatre can make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Just one reason, but in my mind, a once-silent boy who now speaks and sings is reason enough.

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No f-bombs!
No Depends jokes!



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In This Issue

Features

AACTFest 2023 9

Photos from all 12 national company productions and all the awards from the festival

AACT YouthFest National Companies 20

Photos of all YouthFest productions and of the awards presentations

National Directors Conference 28

The biennial conference for individuals who are employed full-time in an administrative or artistic position, November 16-19 in San Antonio, Texas

AACT NewPlayFest 2024 30

Announcing the winning playwrights and producing theatres for the 2024 cycle as AACT NewPlayFest continues its success with producing original plays in world premieres across the country

AACT Member Benefits 34

For more than 30 years, AACT has been committed to providing theatres with the best, most timely resources to help you succeed. Now's the time to renew your membership!

AACT Member Stories 35

The intertwined history of AACT and Iowa's Des Moines Community Playhouse

Ten Most-Produced Shows 36

A new survey, developed and administered by AACT Board Member Michael Cochran, reveals the most-scheduled plays, musicals, and youth productions

Taking It on the Road 38

Stephen Santa, Artistic Director of Omaha Community Playhouse, describes the development of VROOM! Mobile Sensory Theatre for children with sensory sensitivities

News

Announcements	7
<i>Spotlight</i> Goes Quarterly	26
ASCAP/BMI	34
AACT Board Update	40
Spotlight Award	42
Legacy Gifts	42
New Roles	43
AACT Corporate Partners	44

Networking

President's Letter	3
Artie's Advocacy Tip	41
Opportunities & Resources	45
New Play Contests	45
Calendar	46
Advertisers	46

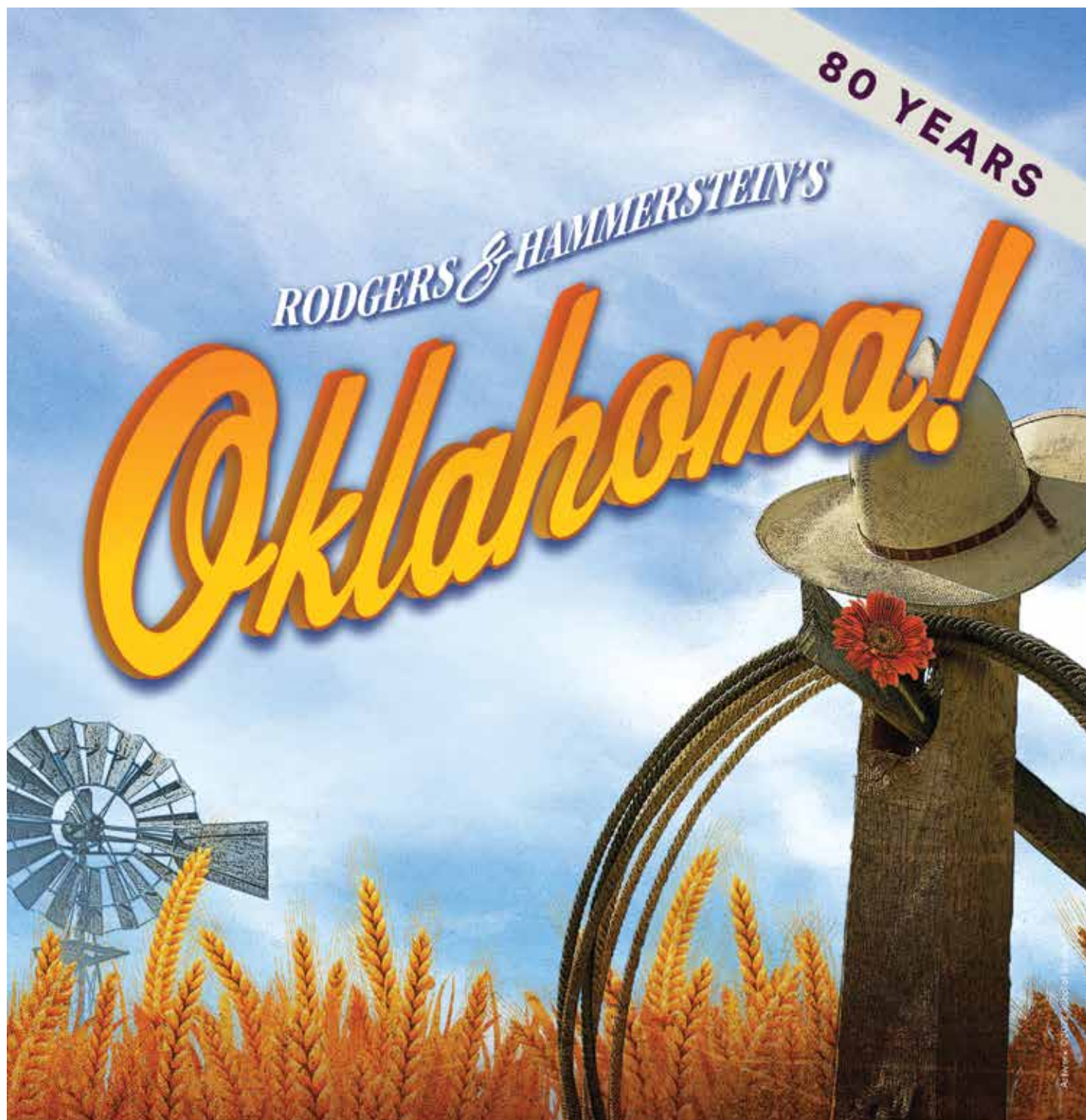
Contacting AACT

AACT
PO Box 101476
Fort Worth, TX 76185
(817) 732-3177
info@aact.org

AACT welcomes *Spotlight* input and requests for advertising rates. Contact David Cockerell at **david@aact.org** to submit content. Visit **aact.org/advertise** for advertising rates and specs.

On the cover: Dahveed Bullis and Matthew Slater in *Pass Over* from Stage Left Theatre in Spokane, Washington, Overall Outstanding Production in AACTFest 2023

Photo: Jolea Brown, Creative Photography



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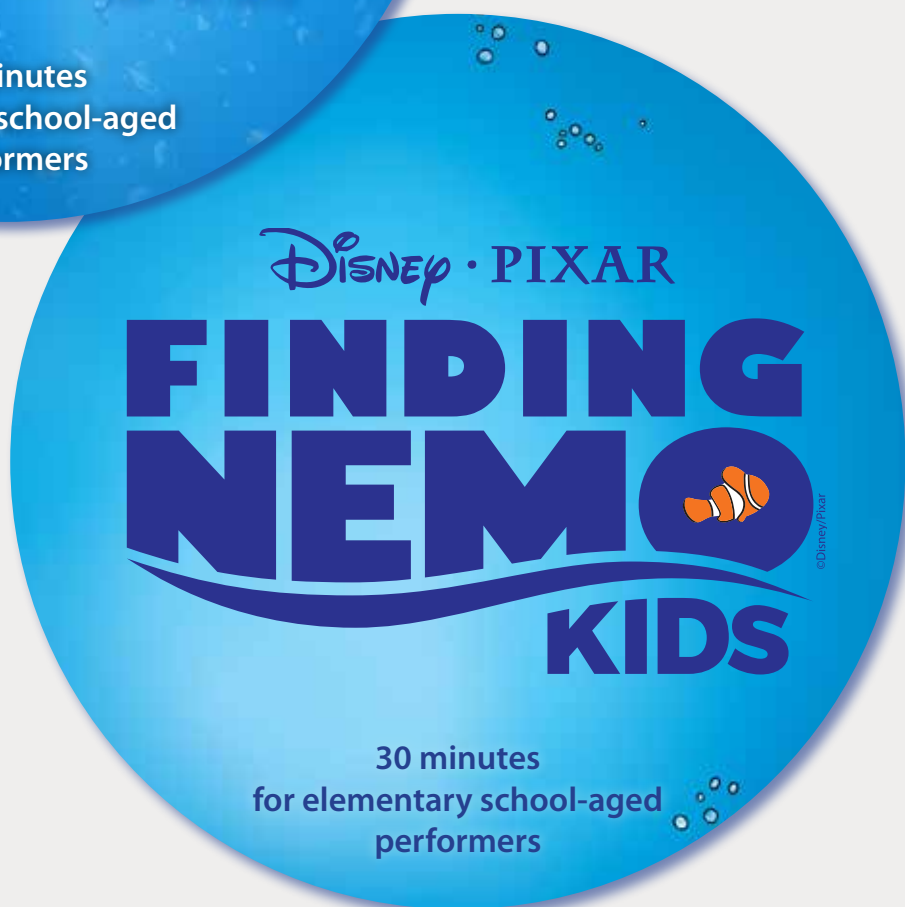
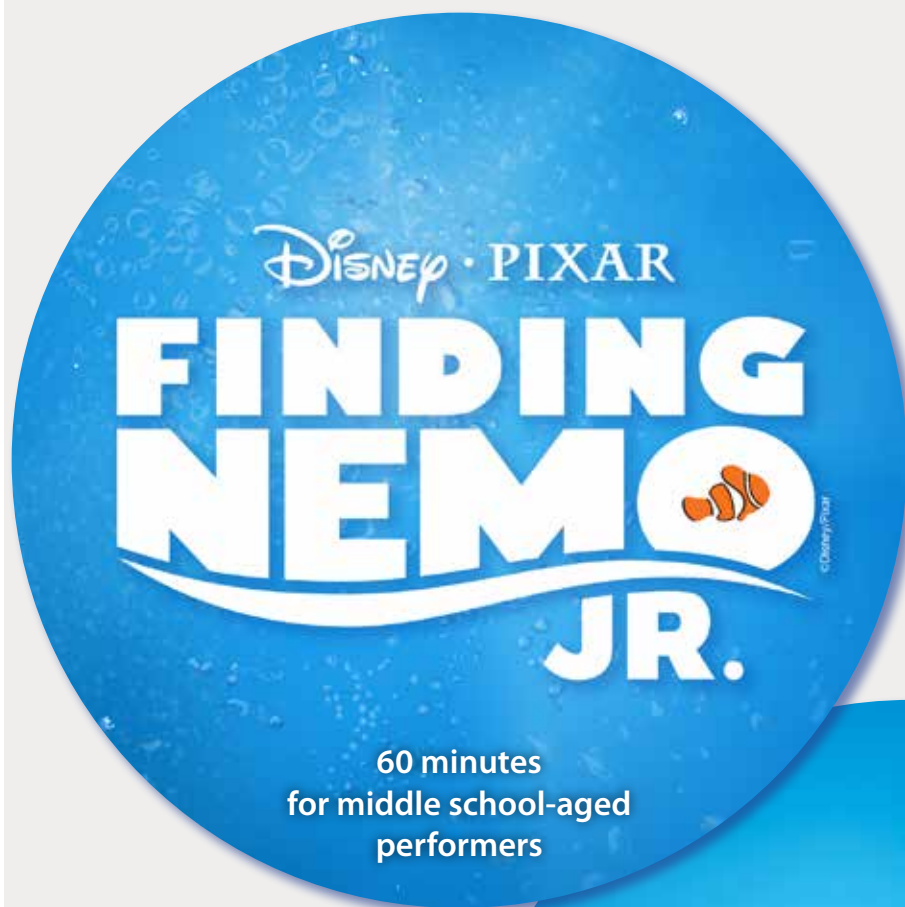
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Spotlight

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.

Spotlight Editors: David Cockerell and Stephen Peithman

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Digital Marketing Administrator

Content Contributors:

americansforthearts.org, Jolea Brown/
Creative Photography, William Cameron,
Catherine Castellani, Quiana Clark-Roland,
Michael Cochran, David Cockerell,
Colin Conces, Jim Covault, WinstonDaniels,
Mary Jo DeNolf, Susan Goes,
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Richard Stephens,
Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton,
DeAndrea Vaughn, Judd Vermillion,
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Upcoming Events

Virtual Masterclasses

September 7 - Stage Management Essentials: A Blueprint for Effective Leadership

November 2 – So You Want to Renovate a City block of Old Buildings into a Theatre Campus (Without any Debt): Capital Campaign Case Study

aact.org/masterclass

Industry Connection

September 13 - Lively McCabe/MTI present *May We All*
aact.org/ic

Roundtables

September 19 - Building an Education Program for Adults

October 17 – Fundraising: The Donor's Buffet

November 14 – Tools and Tricks in Technical Theatre

aact.org/roundtables

Script Club

October 5 – *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, based on the novel by Mark Haddon, adapted by Simon Stephens

aact.org/club

AACT Executive Committee Meeting

November 16, 2023

Drury Plaza Hotel San Antonio Riverwalk
San Antonio, Texas 78205

National Directors Conference

November 16 – 18, 2023

Drury Plaza Hotel San Antonio Riverwalk
San Antonio, Texas 78205

aact.org/ndc

AACT Winter Board Meetings

February 23 - 24, 2024

Courtyard San Diego Old Town
San Diego, California 92110

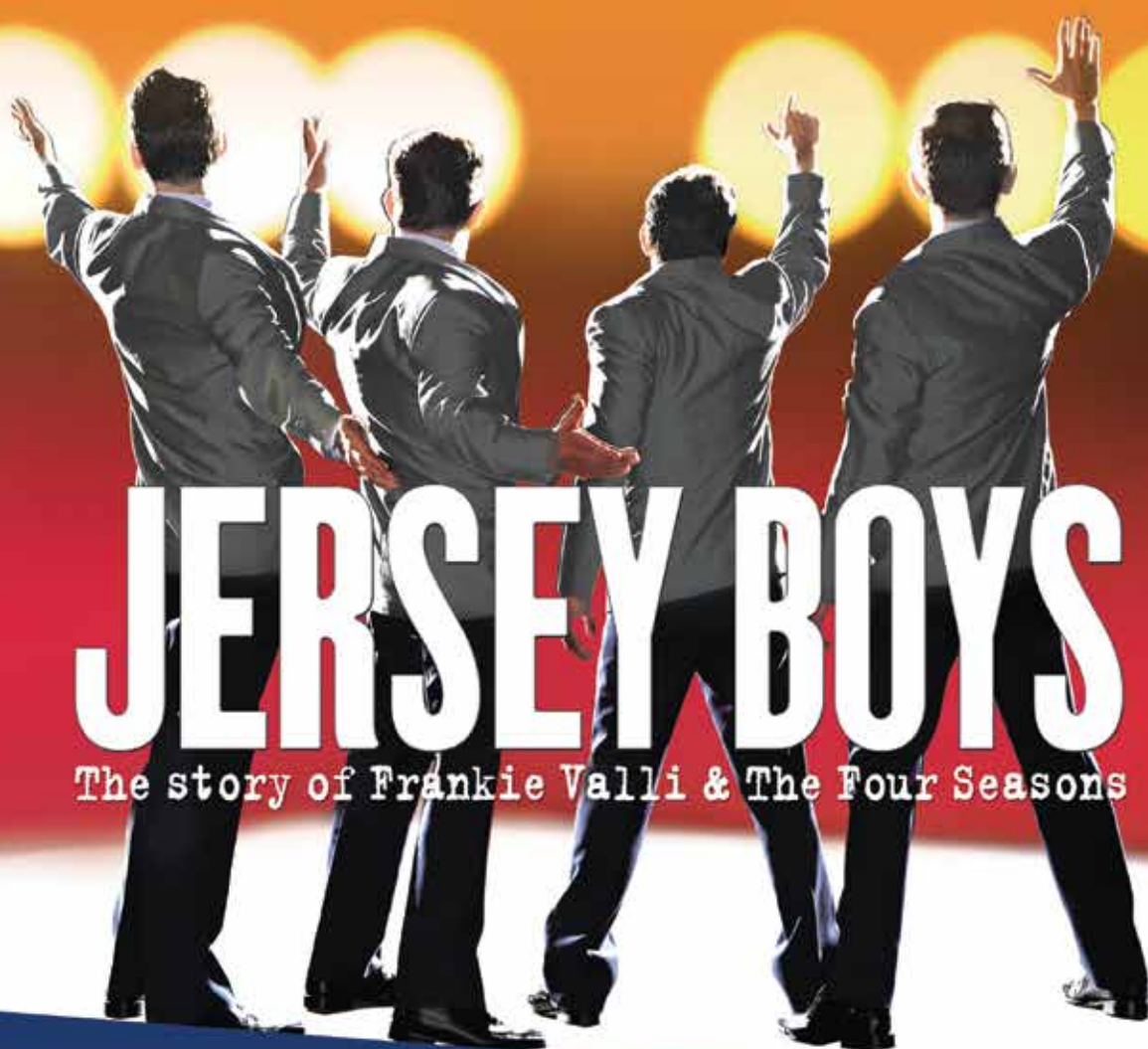
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AACTFest 2023 National Theatre Festival

The Moritz von Bomhard Theater at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts in Louisville, Kentucky, was home to AACTFest 2023 and AACT YouthFest 2023 performances June 14-17.

AACTFest 2023 attendees experienced 12 National Company theatre productions and five youth theatre company productions, representing community theatres across the country and on U.S. military bases in Europe

The Hyatt Regency Louisville was the venue for educational workshops, Ben Cameron's entertaining and informative keynote address, a special luncheon sponsored by MTI and Lively McCabe, monologue and design competitions, a silent auction benefiting the AACT Endowment, and an Exhibit Hall full of theatrical vendors. The week also included the AACT Youth Theatre Conference, the Community Theatre



Management Conference (a pre-festival event) the AACT Adjudication Seminar, AACT Board meetings, annual AACT Membership meeting, and National Awards presentations, as well as the *Belle of Louisville* Sunset Dinner and Cruise, benefiting the AACT Endowment.

Congratulations to all the AACTFest 2023 National Companies showcasing their exceptional productions. The representation of community theatres, the commitment to the craft of live theatre, and the invaluable contributions made to your communities are truly commendable.

AACTFest 2023 National Companies



Winter Flowers

by Lily Rusek

Region 1

The Lexington Players of New England

Lexington, Massachusetts

AACTFest Photos by
Jolea Brown,
Creative Photography



Pride@Prejudice

by Daniel Elihu Kramer

Region 2

Rockville Little Theatre

Rockville, Maryland

rlt-online.org

continued on next page ▶



Three Viewings

by Jeffrey Hatcher
Region 3

Kettle Moraine Players

Slinger, Wisconsin
kmplayhouse.com

Underneath the Lintel

by Glen Berger
Region 4a

**Starkville
Community Theatre**

Starkville, Mississippi
sct-online.org



AACTFest Photos by
Jolea Brown,
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Launch Day

***(Love Stories from the
Year 2108)***

by Michael Higgins
Region 4b

Theatre Tuscaloosa

Tuscaloosa, Alabama
theatretusc.com



Silent Sky

by Lauren Gunderson
Region 3

Kokomo Civic Theatre

Kokomo, Indiana
kokomocivictheatre.org



A Storm Came Up

by Kristy Meanor and Doug Segrest
Region 4b

Wetumpka Depot Players

Wetumpka, Alabama
wetumpkadepot.com



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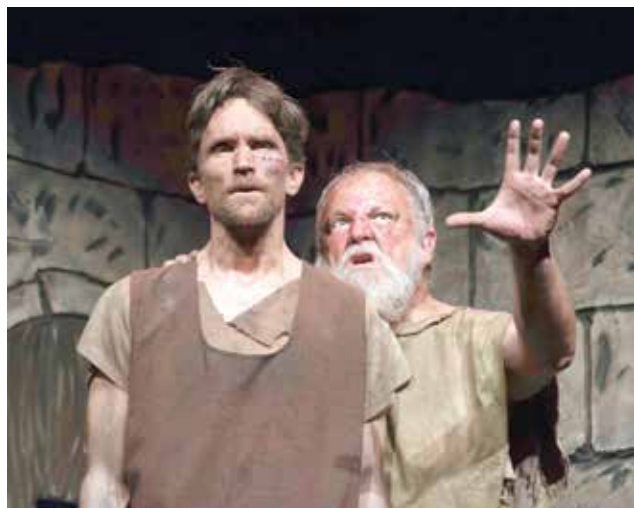
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The Wall

by Richard Lauchman
Region 5

Theatre Atchison

Atchison, Kansas
theatreatchison.org



Pass Over

by Antoinette Chinonye Nwandu
Region 9

Stage Left Theater

Spokane, Washington
stagelefttheater.org



Constellations

by Nick Payne
Region 6

The Studio Theatre

Little Rock, Arkansas
studiotheatrelr.com



Medea

by Christopher Durang
Region 10

The Amelia Earhart Playhouse

U.S. Army, Wiesbaden, Germany
wiesbaden.armymwr.com/programs/amelia-earhart-playhouse



The Outgoing Tide

by Bruce Graham
Region 7

Cheyenne Little Theatre Players

Cheyenne, Wyoming
cheyennelittletheatre.org

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The Actors

The Actors

This award-winning comedy tells the story of a man so grief-stricken by the death of his parents he hires two actors to be his Mom and Dad.

"Brazenly original and unexpectedly profound."

John Thomason, Boca Mag



One More Yesterday

One More Yesterday

This critically-acclaimed musical tells the story of Lydia Taylor, a faded Broadway star, so desperate to work she takes a job in a no-budget slasher-horror movie called "The Vigilante Granny" and her whole life changes.

"Moving, humorous, tuneful and heartfelt...deserves many tomorrows."

William Hirschman, FloridaTheaterOnStage.com



Grindr Mom

Grindr Mom

This award-winning one-women comedy tells the story of a married Mormon woman who joins a gay-dating app called Grindr to learn more about her gay son and winds up learning a whole lot more.

"This show has something for everyone...destined to develop far-reaching legs."

Mindy Leaf, Around Town

AACTFest 2023 Awards

Congratulations to these companies and individuals honored with AACTFest 2023 Awards.

AACTFest 2023 Adjudicators Jeff Calhoun, Faye M. Price, and Rick St. Peter designated these National Company Awards:

Overall Outstanding Production

Pass Over

Stage Left Theatre
Spokane, Washington
Region 9



Director Malcolm Pelles, cast: Dahveed Bullis, Matthew Slater, and Danny Anderson, crew: Michael Schmidt, Jeremy Whittington, Alana Shepherd, Joy Wood, with AACTFest 2023 adjudicators Jeff Calhoun, Faye M. Price, and Rick St. Peter

Outstanding Achievement in Direction

Malcolm Pelles

Pass Over
Stage Left Theatre

Malcolm Pelles accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Direction Award from AACT Board Member Allen Ebert



Outstanding Achievement in a Leading Role

Kris Lee

Underneath the Lintel
Starkville Community Theatre

Kris Lee accepts the Outstanding Achievement in a Leading Role Award from AACT Board Member Sharon Burum



Outstanding Production Nominees

The Outgoing Tide

Cheyenne Little Theatre
Cheyenne, Wyoming
Region 7

The Wall

Theatre Atchison
Atchison, Kansas
Region 5

Underneath the Lintel

Starkville Community Theatre
Starkville, Mississippi
Region 4a

Amy Newberg

Winter Flowers
The Lexington Players of New England

Director/Producer Sal Jones accepts the Outstanding Achievement in a Leading Role Award for Amy Newberg from AACT Board Member Sharon Burum



Amy Newberg and Lida McGirr in the Lexington Players of New England production of Winter Flowers

AACTFest Photos by
Jolea Brown,
Creative Photography

Outstanding Achievement in a Supporting Role

Jeff Tish

The Outgoing Tide
Cheyenne Little Theatre Players

Jeff Tish accepts the Outstanding Achievement in a Supporting Role Award from AACT Board Member Steven H. Butler



Jovon Serrano

Three Viewings
Kettle Moraine Players

Jovon Serrano accepts the Outstanding Achievement in a Supporting Role Award from AACT Board Member Steven H. Butler



Outstanding Achievement in a Featured Role

Joseph Coracle

Pride@Prejudice
Rockville Little Theatre

Scott Bloom accepts the Outstanding Achievement in a Featured Role Award for Joseph Coracle from AACT Board Member Rebecca Fry



Joseph Coracle in the Rockville Little Theatre production of Pride@Prejudice

AACTFest Photos by
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Creative Photography

Outstanding Achievement in a Featured Role

Tony Davison

A Storm Came Up
Wetumpka Depot Players

Director Kristy Meanor (R) accepts the Outstanding Achievement in a Featured Role Award for Tony Davison from AACT Board Member Rebecca Fry



Tony Davison in the Wetumpka Depot Players production of A Storm Came Up

Outstanding Achievement in an Ensemble Performance

Pass Over
Stage Left Theater

Mathew Slater, Danny Anderson, and Dahveed Bullis accept the Outstanding Achievement in an Ensemble Performance Award from AACT Board Member Scot MacDonald



continued on next page ▶

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Outstanding Achievement in Set Design

Jeff Tish

The Outgoing Tide

Cheyenne Little Theatre
Players

Jeff Tish accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Set Design Award from AACT Board Member Dorinda Toner



Outstanding Achievement in Hair and Make-Up

The Wall

Theatre Atchison

Technical Director Chuck Pulliam and Scenic Designer Travis Grossman accept the Outstanding Achievement in Hair and Make-Up from AACT Immediate Past President Chris Serface (center)



Outstanding Achievement in Costume Design

Jeanette Waterman

Launch Day

Theatre Tuscaloosa

Jeanette Waterman accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Costume Design Award from AACT Board Member Kelli McCloud-Schingen



Outstanding Achievement in Lighting Design

Thomas LaFoe

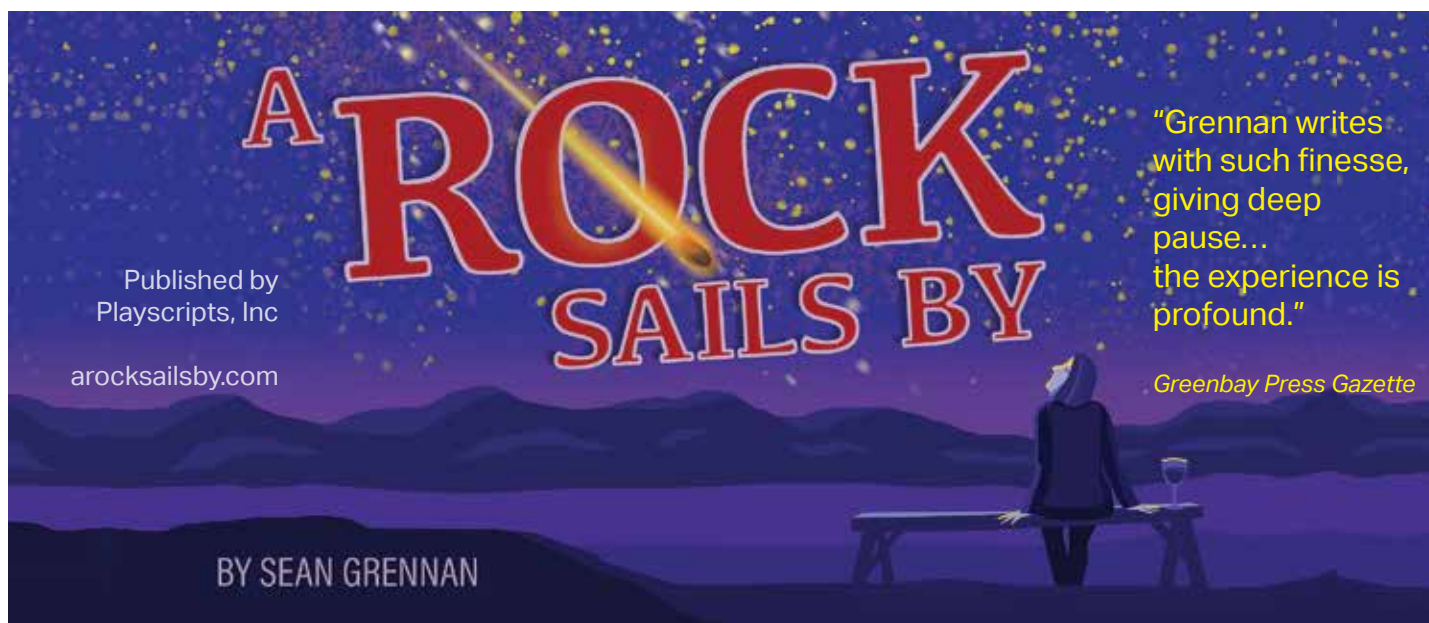
Underneath the Lintel

Starkville Community
Theatre

Thomas LaFoe accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Lighting Design Award from AACT Board Member Emily Anderson



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Outstanding Achievement in Sound Design

Charles Prosser

Launch Day

Theatre Tuscaloosa

Stage Manager Ashlyn Lambert
accepts the Outstanding
Achievement in a Sound Design
Award for Charles Prosser from
AACT Board Member Chris Hamby



Outstanding Achievement in Prop Design

Edwin Eillis

Underneath the Lintel

Starkville Community
Theatre

Kris Lee accepts the Outstanding
Achievement in a Prop Design
Award for Edwin Eillis from AACT
Immediate Past President Chris
Serface



Outstanding Achievement in Prop Design

Silent Sky

Kokomo Civic Theatre

Director Beth Metcalf accepts the
Outstanding Achievement in Prop
Design from AACT Board Member
Kristofer Geddie



Backstage Award

**Cheyenne Little
Theatre Players**

Jeff Tish accepts the Backstage
Award from AACTFest 2023
Technical Director/AACT Board
Member Bob Frame



Awards continue on next page ▶

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Peoples Choice Awards

AACTFest attendees voted for their favorite show, performance, and special moment from the show. Ballots were purchased, with the proceeds benefiting the AACT Endowment Festival Travel Fund that supports AACTFest National Companies.

Favorite Show

Constellations

The Studio Theatre
Little Rock, Arkansas

Justin A. Pike accepts the People's Choice Favorite Show Award from AACT Board Member Scot MacDonald



Favorite Performer

Kris Lee, The Librarian
Underneath the Lintel
Starkville Community Theatre
Starkville, Mississippi

Kris Lee accepts the People's Choice Favorite Performer Award from AACT Board Member Scot MacDonald



Favorite Moment

The Plague Sequence,
Pass Over

Stage Left Theatre
Spokane, Washington

Alana Shepherd accepts the People's Choice Favorite Moment Award from AACT Board Member Scot MacDonald



Monologue Competition

The AACT Monologue Competition was held in Louisville as part of AACTFest 2023. Sixteen participated in the competition, with several selected to compete in the final round. AACT 2023 Monologue Competition Adjudicator Katy Merriman selected these actors for National Awards:

Youth Division

Coen Faber, Mount Horeb, Wisconsin



Adult Division

Dahveed Bullis, Spokane Valley, Washington



AACTFest Photos by
Jolea Brown, Creative Photography

A pink and white advertisement for the musical 'Assisted Living: The Music'. The title is written in large, colorful letters. Below the title, it says 'The Tales Granny Will Never Tell!'. A man in a plaid shirt and a hat is shown in a dynamic pose. Text on the ad states: 'Three out of every five troupes that license the show have it "back by popular demand" within five years.' At the bottom, it says 'STAGE RIGHTS A Member of the Broadway Licensing Family' and 'www.StageRights.com'. There is a QR code in the bottom right corner.

AACT Design Competition

The AACTFest Design Competition was held in a hybrid format during AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky. Virtual and on-site designs were accepted and adjudicated. Adjudicators Christian Boyer and Rebekkah Meixner-Hanks awarded the following

Outstanding Overall Design



Mandy Kay Heath

Mandy Heath, *Urinetown*, Theatre Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee

Scenic Design



Judd Vermillion

Outstanding Scenic Design: Judd Vermillion, *Murder on the Orient Express*, Playhouse 2000, Kerrville, Texas

Honorable Mention: Wayne Martin, *Waiting for Godot*, Barn Lot Theater, Edmonton, Kentucky

Honorable Mention: Digger Feeny/Jenny Abeyta, *Curiouser and Curiouser Too*, TheaterWorks, Peoria, Arizona

Properties Design



David Cockerell

Outstanding Properties Design: Christy Carr, *She Kills Monsters*, Civic Theater Lafayette, Lafayette, Indiana

Lighting Design



Mandy Kay Heath

Outstanding Lighting Design: Mandy Heath, *The Secret Garden*, Theatre Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee

Honorable Mention: Alana Shepherd, *Sweeney Todd*, Stage Left Theatre, Spokane, Washington

Costume Design



Richard Stephens

Outstanding Costume Design: Richard Stephens, *The Wickhams - Christmas at Pemberley*, Port Angeles Community Playhouse, Port Angeles, Washington

Special Design



DeAndrea Vaughn

Outstanding Special Design: DeAndrea Vaughn, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, TheaterWorks, Peoria, Arizona

Honorable Mention: Kirk Longhofer, *Radium Girls*, Wichita Community Theatre, Wichita, Kansas

YouthFest 2023

The third national AACT YouthFest was an integral part of the AACTFest 2023 National Theatre Festival in Louisville. Five youth theatre companies were invited to perform in the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts' Bomhard Theatre as examples of the future of community theatre. AACT YouthFest 2023 was made possible in part by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation.

YouthFest 2023 Companies



Mockingbird – Touring Version

adapted by Julie Jensen from the National Book Award-winning novel by Kathryn Erskine

Blue Springs City Theatre Youth Company

Blue Springs, Missouri

bluespringscitytheatre.com



Once on This Island JR

book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, music by Stephen Flaherty, based on the novel *My Love, My Love*, by Rosa Guy

Star Center Theatre

Gainesville, Florida

starcentertheatre.org



Death Takes the Train

by D.M. Larson

Terrace Playhouse Theatre Troupe

United States Army Garrison, Ansbach, Germany

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A Game

by Dennis E. Noble

Theatre33

Bellevue, Washington

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Silent Sky

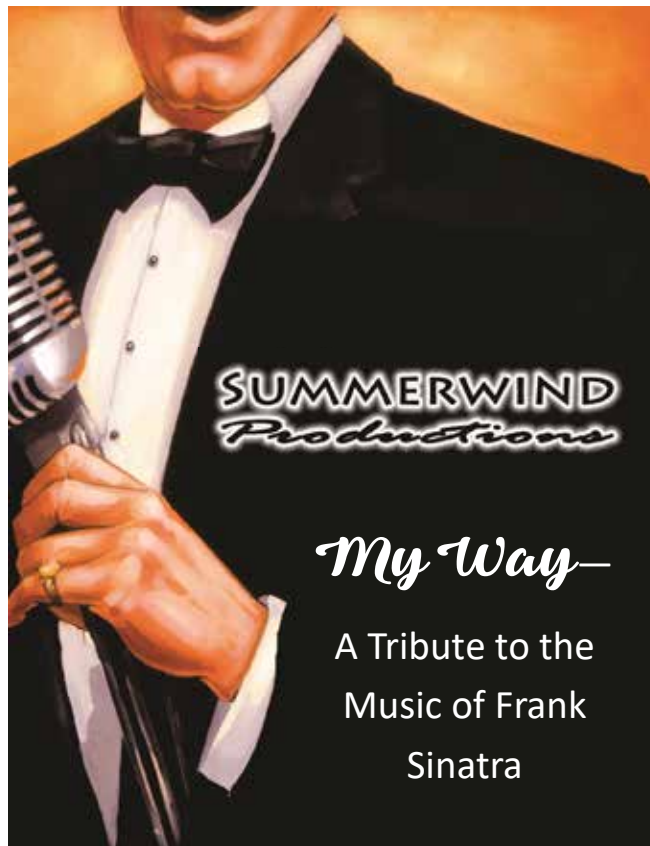
by Lauren Gunderson

Verona Area Community Theater

Verona, Wisconsin

vact.org

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I Left My Heart – A Salute to the Music of Tony Bennett

Simply Simone – The Music of Nina Simone

Babes in Hollywood – The Music of Garland and Rooney

One More For My Baby - A Sinatra Songbook

Town Without Pity – The Love Songs of Gene Pitney

Bonnie & Clyde

Club Morocco

PLAYS:

Dracula - The Case of the Silver Scream (Film Noir)

The Incredible Jungle Journey of Fenda Maria

Casa Blue—The Last Moments in the Life of Freda Kahlo

Vampire Monologues

War of the Worlds

Scripts, Information, and Licensing at:
summerwindproductions.com

AACT YouthFest 2023 Awards

YouthFest 2023 Adjudicators Emily Anderson, Jereme Raickett, and Jennifer York bestowed the following festival awards.

AACTFest Photos by
Jolea Brown,
Creative Photography

Outstanding Achievement in Acting

Coen Faber

Silent Sky

Verona Area Community Theater

Coen Faber accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton



Aiden Cotton

Once On This Island JR.

Star Center Theatre

Aiden Cotton accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton



Sydney Ray

Silent Sky

Verona Area Community Theater

Sydney Ray accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



Patrick Ford

Once On This Island JR.

Star Center Theatre

Patrick Ford accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



Risa Norbury

Mockingbird

Blue Springs City Theatre Youth Company

Risa Norbury accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton



The Ensemble, *A Game*, Theatre33



The cast from A Game accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton.

Jessi Ball

Mockingbird

Blue Springs City Theatre Youth Company

Jessi Ball accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



Desmond Johnson

A Game

Theatre33

Desmond Johnson accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



Outstanding Achievement in Acting *continued*

Emmeline Forsberg

Death Takes the Train

Terrace Playhouse
Theatre Troupe

Emmeline Forsberg accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton



Jacques Masi

Death Takes the Train

Terrace Playhouse
Theatre Troupe

Jacques Masi accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



Standout Performance from an Ensemble Member

Alison Salley

Mockingbird

Blue Springs City Theatre
Youth Company

Alison Salley accepts the Standout Performance from an Ensemble Member Award from AACT Board Member Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton



Standout Performance from an Ensemble Member

Annique Williams

Once on This Island, JR.

Star Center Theatre

Annique Williams accepts the Standout Performance from an Ensemble Member Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



Outstanding Vocal Performance

Aleah Henderson

Once on This Island, JR.

Star Center Theatre

Aleah Henderson accepts the Outstanding Vocal Performance Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



Outstanding Overall Design

Silent Sky

Verona Area
Community Theater

Stage Manager Erin Cassidy and Assistant Stage Manager Callie Lederer accept the Outstanding Overall Design Award from AACT Board Member Chad-Alan Carr



continued on next page ▶



Outstanding Achievement in Sound

A Game

Theatre33

Theatre33 Founder/Artistic Director Marianna Chebotaryova accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Sound Award



Outstanding Technical Achievement

Mockingbird

Blue Springs City Theatre Youth Company



A setting from the Blue Springs Theatre Youth Company production of Mockingbird

Standout Stage Picture: Final Lighting Special

Death Takes the Train

Terrace Playhouse Theatre Troupe

Director/Lighting Technician Jillian Forsberg accepts the Standout Stage Picture: Final Lighting Special Award from AACT Board Member Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton



Backstage Award

Verona Area Community Theater

Stage Manager Erin Cassidy and Assistant Stage Manager Callie Lederer accept the Backstage Award from AACTFest 2023 Technical Director/AACT Board Member Bob Frame



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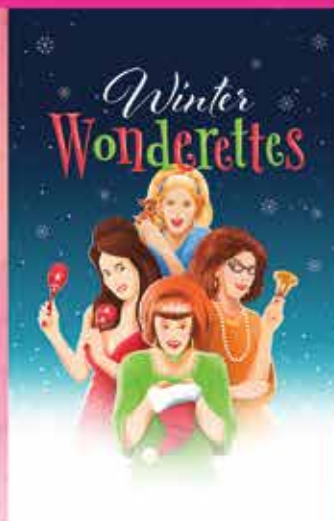
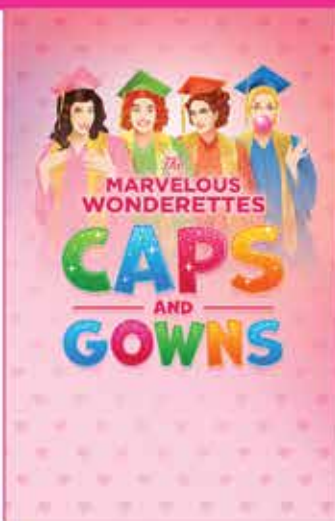
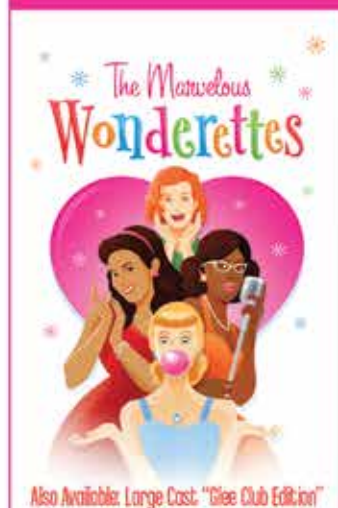
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Better Than Ever: *Spotlight* Goes Quarterly

With this issue, *Spotlight* is moving from six issues per year to a quarterly publication. This move will give AACT the opportunity to enhance content quality, provide additional member-valued benefits online, and secure long-term financial health for the publication.

Specifically, going quarterly lets us shift time-sensitive content to the website or electronic communication, allowing the print publication to provide greater editorial variety and more in-depth articles than has been possible in the past.

AACT Executive Director Quiana Clark-Roland explains “This was no overnight decision. The discussion about going quarterly began last year amongst the AACT Finance Committee, Board, editorial team, and staff. Like many other organizations, we have seen a substantial increase in print and mailing costs, and an increasing demand for digital content. We

concluded that now is the time to make substantial changes that will improve editorial content and ensure *Spotlight*’s financial health and longevity.”

In a collaborative effort, staff, the editorial team, and others will work to make AACT news and offerings more digitally accessible while we make each issue of *Spotlight* richer with feature articles, interviews, and how-to content. Our website will be regularly updated with expanded content from the print magazine (including members-only articles), and continued access to the digital version of *Spotlight*.

The print edition of *Spotlight* will be mailed to AACT members and subscribers in March (Spring), June (Summer), September (Fall) and December (Winter). It’s a big change, but we believe is an essential move that will benefit AACT members and AACT itself. *Spotlight* will continue to be the direct line and voice for community theatre.

For Advertisers

For this transitional year, AACT will be honoring the 2023 six-issue discount for any advertiser who places or has already placed an ad order, which can be used for the following Fall and Winter 2023 issues.

- 1) Fall 2023
- 2) Winter 2023
- 3) Spring 2024
- 4) Summer 2024
- 5) Fall 2024
- 6) Winter 2024

Upcoming deadlines to place an order and submit artwork:
Monday, September 18 for the December/January/February 2023 issue.
Reserve your *Spotlight* ad by contacting Quiana Clark-Roland at quiana@aact.org.

Issue	Issue Date	Order/Artwork Due
Winter 2023	December 1, 2023	September 18, 2023
Spring 2024	March 1, 2024	February 10, 2024
Summer 2024	June 1, 2024	May 10, 2024
Fall 2024	September 1, 2024	August 10, 2024
Winter 2024	December 1, 2024	October 10, 2024

For more information, or to reserve your advertising space, contact Quiana Clark-Roland at quiana@aact.org or 817-732-3177, ext. 5.



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concordsho.ws/PopcornFalls

November Conference is “Game-Changer” and “Best Form of Self-Care”

The **National Directors Conference**, November 16-18, is AACT’s biannual, three-day conference, where full-time theatre directors (artistic, managing, or administrative) gather to share their challenges and successes, learn about other theatres’ operations, and network with colleagues from across the country.

Based on pre-conference surveys, sessions at the San Antonio, Texas, conference will include in-depth conversations about audience development, community engagement, financing the organization, production hits and misses, and much more. Attendees are guaranteed to leave this conference with practical tools to take back to their theatres.

Susan Goes, Executive Director of Oregon’s Cottage Theatre, agrees: “My key takeaways were pragmatic ones—software tools to investigate, ticket-pricing strategies to consider, and new ideas for community partnerships, among other things,” she said.

“There were ideas in abundance.”

While the new perspectives and vital insights the National Directors Conference provides are important, Goes stressed that the experience is much bigger—it’s personal, too. She found that attending the conference and reconnecting with other community



David Cockerell

AACT Past President Chris Serface address attendees at the 2021 National Directors Conference in San Antonio, Texas

theatre people was “the best form of self-care I could imagine. [It] reminded me of the joy and importance of live theatre.”

Sara Phoenix, Vice President of Development at Tulsa Performing Arts Center, who previously attended the conference as Artistic Director of Theatre Tulsa, said that the most important part of attending the conference is “talking to others who do what I do, and who understand the unique nature of our roles. We build relationships.”

Scot MacDonald, the newly appointed Managing Director of Theatre Charlotte, previously attended the conference as a representative of Memorial Opera House in Valparaiso, Indiana. He is impressed by how, while “we all come from our many scattered points on the map, each time we come together we pick right back up where we left off.”

Most important, he says, “We celebrate each other when we succeed, we grieve our losses together. Conferences like this are incredible, and they can be game changers.”

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Michael D. Fox, who returns as conference facilitator, has been praised for “being so attentive to the room’s needs” and his ability to “steer the conversations with great skill.”



Michael attended Southern Utah University on a performance scholarship and received a Bachelor of Science in Business Finance degree from the University of Phoenix. After several years managing medical facilities, he returned to theatre, performing in *The Music Man* at Hale Centre Theatre (HCT) in 2002. By the end of the run, he had a job

in the office. He worked as Box Office Manager and helped create the consolidated role of Director of Operations, taking responsibility for all customer service, financial control and reporting, and general operational management with roles in programming and marketing. He’s been Hale Centre Theatre’s Chief Operating Officer since 2016. A burgeoning playwright, Michael will present his new work, *The Time Machine*, at HCT May 2024. He has served as Treasurer on AACT’s Board of Directors, and is President of the newly formed Fox Den Arts, offering “great, saleable scripts at low rates and consulting services for the artistic community.” foxdenarts.com

AACT National Directors Conference 2023

San Antonio, Texas • November 16-18

Drury Plaza Hotel San Antonio Riverwalk

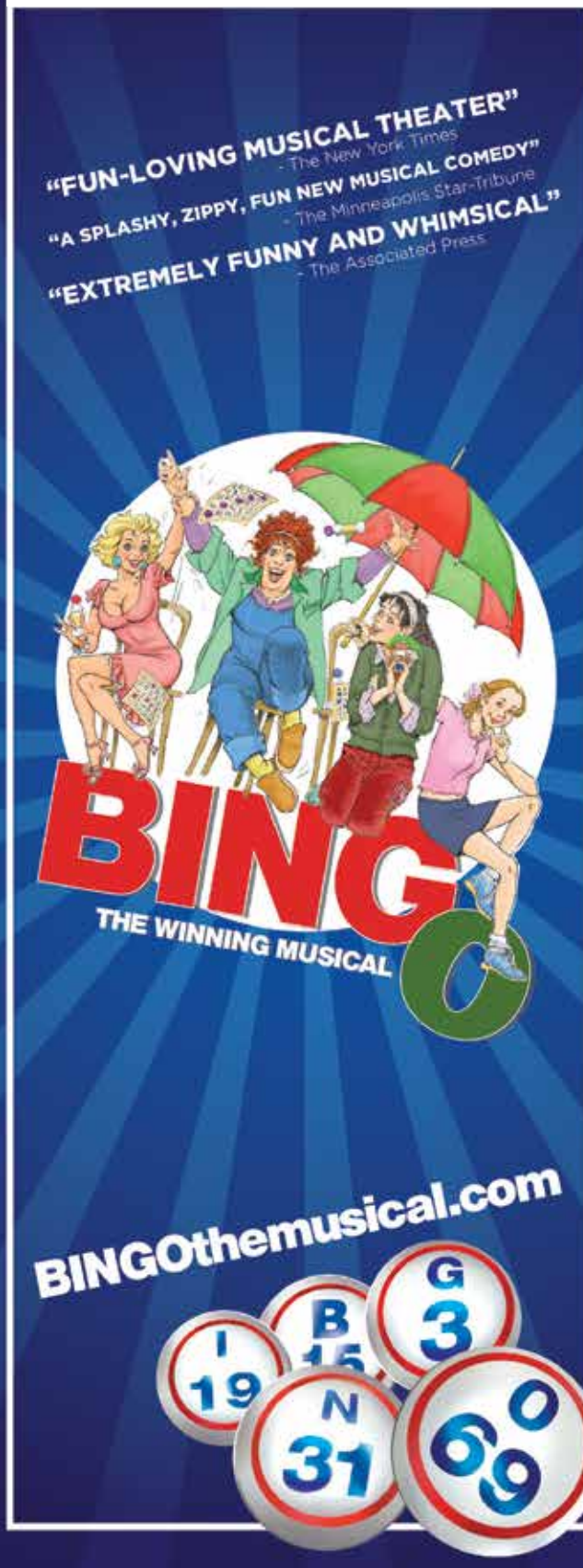
AACT Members: \$400

Non-Members: \$425



For registration and additional information, including hotel and airline accommodations and schedule, please visit aact.org/ndc.

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AACT NewPlayFest 2024 World Premieres

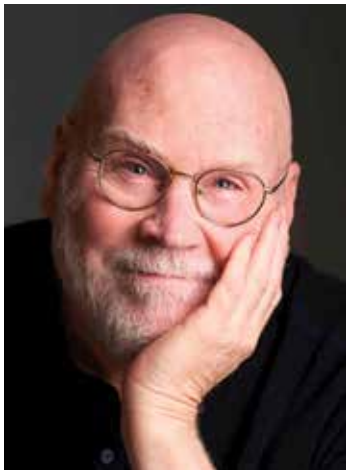


AACT NewPlayFest continues its success with producing original plays as world premieres across the country. All winning plays are available for production through Dramatic Publishing Company, following each play's NewPlayFest premiere.

Here are the winning plays of the 2024 cycle.

***Criminal Mischief*, by William Cameron**

Freddy's in love with Angie and she's in love with him. The problem? Angie's married to Spencer, Freddy's older brother. This sets off a series of comical yet criminal misadventures, putting the whole family in the sights of Detective Lieutenant Alice Ford, who's got issues of her own. *Criminal Mischief* takes a humorous look at love and sex, family and forgiveness, crime and punishment.



William Cameron is a playwright, director, actor, and educator. His plays have been performed around the country, including Theatre 40 in Los Angeles, the Harold Clurman Theatre in New York City, and the Curious Theatre Company in Denver. Bill's plays include *Violet Sharp*, a prize-winning drama of the Lindbergh kidnapping (Concord Theatricals); *Truth Be Told* (Stanley Drama

Award, 2020), a drama confronting the mass shooting epidemic; and *Every Livin' Soul* (Winner, Dayton Playhouse FutureFest 2022), a tale of Depression-era crime and punishment. In his 31-year tenure as Professor of Theatre and Communication Arts at Washington & Jefferson College, he founded the Pennsylvania school's first academic theatre program and directed over 40 student productions.

The Sauk, Jonesville, Michigan

February 2-11, 2024

***The Red Flags*, by Catherine Castellani**

Happily married Philip and Chloe want all their friends and family to be as well-coupled as they are, especially Phil's psychotic little brother Ric and Chloe's commitment-shy best friend Gabrielle. The match begins on a breezy note, but the darker reasons that Ric and Gabrielle have resisted coupledom won't be going away. Despite Philip and Chloe's belated horror that they started this at all, Ric and Gabrielle go down a road of mutual fascination, culminating in a proposal that courts all kinds of bad luck.



Catherine Castellani's plays include *Level Up*, *Possession*, *2Y20M*, *In Search of Lost Time*, *The Red Flags*, *The Mongoose and the Cobra*, *Windsor Terrace*, and *The Bigsley Project*. Her work has been developed by HB Studios, The Valdez/Last Frontier Theatre Conference, Dixon Place, Naked Angels Tuesdays@9, The Nora Salon, Bloom, and

Centenary Stage. Her 10-minute plays have been produced nationwide, including at Actors Theatre of Louisville, City Theatre (Miami), The ArtsCenter (Carrboro, NC), and The Public Theater (New York City). Catherine is a two-time Fellow of the MacDowell Colony, and one-time Ucross Foundation resident. catherinecastellani.com

Verona Area Community Theater, Verona, Wisconsin

February 8-17, 2024

***I Thought I Knew You*, by Philip Kaplan**

Cody has exploded a van in Louisville, killing himself and five other people. Jen, his sister, returns to the family home to comfort her devastated parents, and encounters Cody's ghost—or is it only a delusion? What happened to Cody? Who's to blame, and does it matter? How does a family move forward from tragedy?

continued on page 32 ▶

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Philip J. Kaplan has been published in *Best Men's Monologues 2021* and three volumes of *Best Ten-Minute Plays* (all Smith and Kraus). Full lengths include *Comfort Zone* (Essence of Acting), *Losing Sandi* (Ensemble Columbus Theatre), *The Best Day of Your Life* (Vintage Theatre, published by Off the Wall Plays), *Bunnyboy* (The Growing Stage), and *The Cupcake Conspiracy* (with C.J.

Ehrlich, Rover DramaWerks, Florentine Players). His one-acts and ten-minute plays have been produced around the country.
philipkaplan.weebly.com

Stage Left Theater, Spokane, Washington

March 22-April 7, 2024

***Eating Blackberries*, by Pam Harbaugh**

A raging Mother Nature serves as backdrop to shifting landscapes of human relationships. Set in Northern California, where wildfires and wildlife threaten recently divorced Elizabeth and her teenage son, Jackson. As they prepare to move out of their home, a surprise visit by her ex, Paul, and his new pregnant wife, Sofia, erupts into a furious confrontation, leading to unexpected results. As earthquakes crack foundations and relationships realign, an encroaching thicket of blackberry brambles has Sofia worried. But Elizabeth comforts the young mother, calling the blackberries little gems among the briars—Mother Nature's way of saying she's sorry for all that she puts people through.



Pam Harbaugh was the theatre critic and arts writer for 25 years at *Florida Today* newspaper on Florida's "Space Coast." Now a freelancer, she writes about the theatre for *Vero News* and *Florida Theater On Stage*. Her play, *Casserole*, was an AACT NewPlayFest-winning play in 2022, receiving its world premiere at Boise Little

Theater. Her earlier play, *Snowfall*, won the New Works Festival at the Henegar Center in Melbourne, Florida. Pam served on the American Theatre Critics Association's Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award committee and was the resident director for the inaugural season of Theatre on the Edge, which was awarded Best New Theater Company by the *Orlando Weekly*.

Hickory Community Theatre, Hickory, North Carolina

April 5-20, 2024

***Tennessee Wet Rub*, by Kim E. Ruyle**

It's January 30, 1951, and perhaps the worst winter storm in Tennessee's history is burying the state under snow and ice. Roads have been shut down, and people are without power. As the storm rages, Bertha and Hank, an older white couple, are huddled in their shuttered barbecue restaurant around a kerosene lantern when two young people enter—a white girl and a black male. Bertha and Hank's values and compassion are put to the test when a deputy sheriff arrives, hunting for something or someone.



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March 13-17, 2024

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Embracing a New Era



Kim E. Ruyle writes stories that come from his unique background. After growing up in the Pacific Northwest, he served in the US Army and then worked in the skilled trades before starting college. Kim acquired three master's degrees and a Ph.D., and has taught at four universities. He served more than two decades as a human resource executive and leadership development

consultant before focusing on writing for the stage. He completed his first play, *Kalispell*, in 2017. The play won an award and had multiple productions, and Kim was hooked. Since then, he has written six more full-length plays that continued to win awards and be produced.

Cottage Theatre, Cottage Grove, Oregon
August 9-25, 2024

***The China Shop*, by Richard Manley**

Ending years of self-exile following the death of his wife, semi-famous poet Derby Walters quietly accepts a house-sitting invitation for a Manhattan co-op. Wanting to inconspicuously slip back into society at his own pace, Derby is repeatedly thwarted by an inquisitive female neighbor, her pushy mother, snobby members of the co-op board, and a lawyer determined to have him thrown out of the building for what seems like a murky past. His hopes for privacy fail miserably, except for one infuriating exception, who forces the overly intellectual Derby to recognize that happiness is often a matter of recognizing the potential of "matches, struck unexpectedly in the dark."



Richard Manley spent two decades as a successful commercial writer before starting his second career as a playwright 16 years ago. Since then, he has written 11 full-length plays and four one-acts, produced in New York and a dozen other cities. He has won or been a finalist in over 40 national and international writing competitions, including the Ashland New Plays

Festival, the STAGE Award (best new play about science and

technology), the John Gassner Memorial Playwriting Award (New England Theatre Conference), the Pillars Prize, the Getchell Award (Southeastern Theatre Conference), UCM (best new play for the young theatre audience, 2017), Child's Play/YETi, (best new play for the young theatre audience, 2018), and the Woodward/Newman Award (three-time finalist). His work has been published by Smith & Kraus, the *Ponder Review*, and by Applause Theatre and Cinema Books.

Lincoln Community Playhouse, Lincoln, Nebraska
Fall 2024

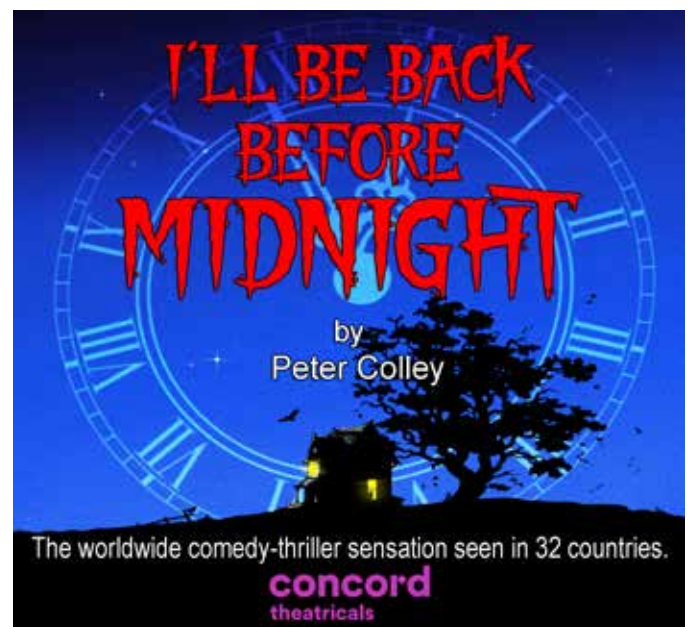


AACT NewPlayFest 2024 is made possible in part by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation, created by the children of Frank Ayre Lee as a tribute to their father, and a legacy for the creative endeavors of his cousin and friend, Jack. The family is pleased to honor both men through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre through AACT NewPlayFest. For more information, visit:

aact.org/newplayfest-2024



Dramatic Publishing Company (DPC) publishes AACT NewPlayFest's winning plays in anthologies, and also licenses production of the winning plays. Previous AACT NewPlayFest winning plays are available in acting editions from DPC. Visit aact.org/dpc for links to anthologies and plays, and to learn more about discounts and special offers for AACT members.



AACT Membership

For more than 30 years, AACT has been committed to providing theatres with the best, most timely resources to help you succeed. Annual AACT memberships are valid September 1 through August 31. Monthly AACT memberships are also available. Visit aact.org/fees.

Discount on AACT Events

- National Directors Conference, November 16-19, 2023
- AACT Member Roundtables – Free access to members only

Individual members receive:

- Discounted or free professional development programs, events, and conferences
- Access to members-only online library and resources
- A digital and/or printed copy of *Spotlight* magazine plus weekly digital communications
- Member-only discounts on scripts, rentals, and theatre services
- Peer-to-peer networking with theatre professionals nationwide

Organizational members receive:

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Learn more about membership benefits:

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How to Join or Renew

To join or renew your membership, go to aact.org/join, or use this QR code:



If you or your theatre are having financial difficulties, reach out to Karen at karen@aact.org to discuss payment plan options.

If your organization has previously not paid electronically, we ask that you start doing so online at aact.org. AACT has moved all membership join/renew processes online. (If you require assistance, please let us know by calling 817-732-3177.) Paper invoicing will be available by request.

Special Offers for First-Time Members

- First-time organizations can receive a 50% discount on their second year!
- First Time Individuals can join for only \$50!

ASCAP and BMI Offer AACT Member Discounts

AACT offers members two exclusive, specially priced Community Theatre Licenses. Purchase both and unlock additional savings!



ASCAP (the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), offers members a 30% discount on royalties for copyrighted music. ASCAP represents more than 450,000

songwriters, composers, lyricists, and music publishers. The complete repertoire can be viewed on the ASCAP website [aact.org].



BMI offers members a 5% discount on royalties for copyrighted music. BMI represents the public performance rights of musical works by more than 1.3 million songwriters, composers, and music publishers. The complete repertoire can be viewed on the BMI website [bmi.com]

the discounted rate. Both AACT membership and ASCAP/BMI fees must be received in the AACT office by September 30. More information, including rate schedules, based on theatre operating budgets, may be found at aact.org/ascap and aact.org/bmi.

These exclusive Community Theatre Licenses cover a theatre at all its venues for the entire AACT membership year. The licenses include copyrighted pre-show, intermission, and post-show music played by means other than live performers. (They do not cover recorded music during a play or music performed live, such as in a musical revue/cabaret or instrumental performance.)

As people involved in the arts, we understand and respect the need for artists to be compensated for their craft. For composers, that is usually through royalties administered by ASCAP and BMI.

The Community Theatre License year is September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024. An AACT membership is required to receive

In The Room Where It Happened

Nothing succeeds like success, and it's notable that so much of AACT's history is intertwined with Iowa's Des Moines Community Playhouse

It began in the late 1980s when leaders of the American Community Theatre Association (ACTA), a division of the American Theatre Association (ATA), decided to withdraw and form a new, independent organization.

As a recently elected board member of ACTA, John Viars of The Playhouse, attended the ACTA winter board meeting in West Palm Beach, Florida, led by President Bea Miller. There, Jim Carver, Twink Lynch, Mort Clark, and others were actively involved in the discussions and negotiations to create a new national organization. At his first ACTA meeting, Viars was persuaded to resign his ACTA board membership, and instead join the board of the new American Association of Community Theatre (AACT). He did so, and in 1986, the Des Moines Community Playhouse became a charter member of AACT.

It was the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship, for three of AACT's presidents were staff members of The Playhouse: John Viars, 1991-1993; Ron Ziegler, 1995-1997; and Rod McCullough, 2009-2011. In addition, Viars facilitated the National Director's Conference 16 times, and Ziegler served as AACT's Festivals and Education Coordinator. They and McCullough also adjudicated festivals around the country and abroad.

This record of involvement reflects the extraordinary history of The Playhouse itself. Founded in 1919, it has operated under various names and in various homes, ever since. With more than 104 years of uninterrupted service, The Playhouse is among the oldest continuously operating community theatres in the U.S.

In the 1980s and 1990s, The Playhouse achieved international recognition for its host status for the first-ever International Community Theatre Festival in June 1990, co-chaired by Viars and Burt Routman. Following a keynote address by actor Susan Strasberg, the festival showcased theatrical work from 17 different groups (including two children's theatre companies) from around the globe. Representing the United States at the festival was the Civic Theatre of Central Florida's revealing production of *Doubles*. The final day of the festival included a dinner at the governor's mansion, hosted by Governor Terry Branstad.

It was an impressive beginning for what is now aact WORLD-FEST, currently held every two years at Florida's Venice Theatre.

The Playhouse continued to find ways to help AACT grow and better serve its members. When John Viars became AACT President in 1991, he saw a great need for a national office. To this end, the Playhouse contributed office space, a computer, and a part-time executive secretary. AACT's national office remained in Des Moines until 1994, when Julie Crawford was hired as AACT's first Executive Director, and the office moved to College Station, Texas.

Today, The Playhouse continues to be an active member of AACT, with staff serving on committees, participating in festivals, and saying yes to seemingly any ask. Its belief in AACT's mission continues. As David Kilpatrick, the Playhouse's Executive Director, tells his board, "AACT is a valuable asset for community theatres around the nation and military installations abroad. As members, we receive so much more than what we pay to be a member. The resources, connections, and insight into other theatres gives us a clear and broad understanding of our industry, with possible solutions to challenges and great celebrations of our success. From my perspective, membership is AACT is simply not negotiable."

The Playhouse has two performance spaces. The John Viars Theatre produces a varied season of new Broadway hits and classics each year, while the Kate Goldman Children's Theatre produces four shows each year for family audiences. The Playhouse also has



Des Moines Community Playhouse

an established education department with dedicated classrooms and year-round programming, plus a number of performance groups that serve special populations in the community.

Given these achievements and the intertwined history of AACT and The Playhouse, it should come as no surprise that the Des Moines theatre has been chosen to host the AACTFest 2025 national festival.

"It's an ideal location in the heart of America," said AACT Executive Director Quiana Clark-Roland. "We're looking forward to working together once again in a collaborative effort to present community theatre at its best."

This article was composed by Playhouse Executive Director David R. Kilpatrick with aid from the AACT website, previous Executive Director John Viars' memories, and Playhouse archives. It is just a glimpse of 104 active years of bringing theatre to the community.

A Plan for All Seasons

Current Trends in Community Theatre Production

The play really *is* the thing. Whatever else we may offer our communities, what anchors us most is what we put on our stages.

That's why planning your next season or evaluating the current one is an essential task. And knowing what other theatres are doing—and why—helps bring things into focus so you can make important decisions with greater confidence.

That's the objective of a new survey, developed and administered by AACT Board Member Michael Cochran—who also serves as Executive Director of Market House Theatre in Paducah, Kentucky.

One hundred and forty-one theatres filled out the complete survey. The results may offer some surprises, along with confirmation of what many of us have learned from our own experience. It's always interesting to see how your theatre compares with others around the country. But you'll also find data here that will help in your work of shaping your theatre's artistic direction.

The Survey Universe

Our survey focused on what theatres are offering in their current or upcoming season. Most, but not all, theatres offer a traditional fall-to-spring season. Whatever calendar is used, what constitutes a “main” season can be different for different theatres. Some offer only youth/family shows or provide those productions outside their main season. Some theatres offer a summer series or shows in a second venue, among other options.

The Data:

68% of surveyed theatres have a traditional fall-to-spring season.

22% have a January-to-December calendar year season

10% have seasons that do not start in the fall *or* in January.

53% of surveyed produce more than five shows in their main season

37% produce four to five shows in their main season

10% produce three or fewer shows

60% also produce youth or family plays outside their main season.

The largest group of theatres (25%) had budgets of less than \$50,000; the second largest (21%) had budgets of \$100,000 to \$249,000. In total, just under two thirds (61%) of theatres surveyed had a budget of less than \$500,000.

Non-musicals

The survey reveals that more non-musicals than musicals were slated for production this season.

The largest group (30%) of theatres produce three non-musicals a season, with the second largest group (22%) producing two non-musicals each year. Especially striking is that of the 263 different titles scheduled, almost three quarters (73%) of the titles were scheduled by just one of the surveyed theatres—underscoring the breadth of community theatre programming.

The Data:

30% of surveyed theatres produce three non-musicals a year

22% produce two non-musicals a year

19% produce four or more non-musicals a year

17% produce four non-musicals a year

12% produce one non-musical a year

Most-Scheduled Plays (includes ties)

1. *The Play That Goes Wrong*
2. *A Christmas Carol* (multiple versions)
3. *Clue*
4. *Misery*
5. *The Book of Will*
5. *A Christmas Story*
5. *Love/Sick*
5. *The Mousetrap*
5. *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express*
5. *Over the River and Through the Woods*
5. *Steel Magnolias*

Most-Scheduled Playwrights

1. Ken Ludwig
2. Jones Hope Wooten
3. Lauren Gunderson
4. Neil Simon

Musicals

Over half (53%) of the surveyed theatres produce one to two musicals each season, with the largest segment (30%) producing two. Of the 160 musical titles scheduled, 56% were listed by only one theatre in the survey. This compares with 75% of non-musical play titles listed by only one theatre. Most theatres

appear to be scheduling more well-known musicals because national trends seem to suggest box office sales are greater for titles or familiar themes audiences know.

The Data:

32% of surveyed theatres produce two musicals a year

21% produce one musical a year

21% produce three musicals a year

14% produce more than four musicals a year

12% produce four musicals a year

[Note that some theatres produce only musicals]

Most-Scheduled Musical (includes ties)

1. *The Lightning Thief*
2. *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*
2. *The Addams Family*
2. *9 to 5*
3. *The Prom*
4. *Fiddler on the Roof*
4. *A Christmas Carol*
5. *The Wizard of Oz*
6. *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*
6. *Pippin*
7. *Something Rotten*
7. *The Sound of Music*
7. *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*
7. *Sweeney Todd*
7. *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*

Youth Productions

Approximately 60% of theatres produce youth or family plays outside their main season. The following are the most-produced productions defined by their theatres as youth shows.

Top Youth Productions Scheduled

(includes ties)

1. *Disney's Finding Nemo JR*
2. *Disney's Beauty and the Beast JR*
3. *Annie JR*
4. *Disney's Frozen JR*
5. *Mean Girls JR*
6. *Disney's Descendants*
6. *The Wizard of Oz: Youth Edition*
6. *The Lightning Thief*
6. *Disney's High School Musical JR*
6. *Footloose: Youth Edition*

Final Thoughts

One of the strengths of AACT membership is information sharing, so that member theatres don't feel alone in making major decisions or embarking on new initiatives. With that in mind, a PDF with complete survey results is available for download on our website—again, thanks to Michael Cochran. [aact.org/season-survey]

Survey administrator Michael Cochran is Executive Director at Market House Theatre in Paducah, Kentucky. Now marking his 40th year with MHT, he also serves on the AACT Board of Directors, and is a past board member of Arts KY and the Kentucky Theatre Association. His original play Eternity was selected as one of the winners of AACT NewPlayFest 2018 and was published by Dramatic Publishing. He has a bachelor's degree in theatre from the University of Wisconsin Whitewater and a Master of Fine Arts degree in theatre from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.



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Taking It on the Road

Mobile Theatre for Children with Autism and other Sensory Sensitivities

Stephen Santa, Artistic Director, Omaha Community Playhouse

The VROOM! Mobile Sensory Theatre started as a spark of an idea three years ago in a coffee shop. At the time, I was the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Jumping Jack Theater in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, creating immersive theatrical experience for children with developmental disabilities and other sensory sensitivities.

Like many theaters in 2020, we were brainstorming how we could continue to serve our audiences during the pandemic. We'd learned through our years of touring to schools, commu-

participatory sense-making are important tools in growth and development. When a child has severe disabilities, opportunities for sense-making may be diminished, which leaves them more dependent on participatory sense-making than other children." [Full article at aact.org/sensory]

A New Opportunity

After touring in western Pennsylvania during the summer of 2020, a new opportunity arose. In 2021 I was hired as the Artistic Director of the Omaha Community Playhouse (OCP). Only a month into my new role and life in Nebraska, a local autism advocate (and parent of an autistic child) reached out to help bring the Mobile Sensory Theatre to Omaha. Through a remarkable fundraising effort by OCP's development team, this experience is provided to families and schools at no cost. This was an opportunity to serve a new community and create something even better than the initial concept. The trailer was replaced by a cargo van, the interior of the van was gutted, and a magical world of lights and sound was created inside by OCP's remarkable staff (who were also busy creating 10 other productions that year.) Four actors were cast and trained, and we launched the VROOM! Mobile Sensory Theatre in Omaha in April of this year.



The Mobile Sensory Theatre arrives at home in Omaha, ready to take a trip to the stars

nity events, and festivals that there were challenges for our audiences simply to arrive at the theater, let alone experience the actual presentation. From that initial conversation—and several lattes—the Mobile Sensory Theatre was born.

This highly interactive, and exploratory experience between one child and one actor first took place in the back of a cargo trailer that we would send directly to a family's home.

The immersive, participatory approach is key. According to an article by researchers at the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, University of North Carolina, "Both sense-making and

The experience inside the van—called "Starshine!"—is a 30-to 40-minute sensory-enriched adventure to the stars that provides an intimate theatrical experience for one audience member and up to two caregivers, parents, or siblings. During the show, kids enjoy the magic of the sky, gaze at constellations, dance with asteroids, hear soothing sounds, and even lend a helping hand as "Star Keepers," so that every star can shine its brightest.

It's an environment designed for exploration and relaxation, where children are encouraged to explore in a way that is most comfortable for them. They discover multiple textures, calming sounds and lighting, and even explore their sense of taste and smell.



An audience member, also known as the "Recruit" explores the stars inside of the Mobile Sensory Theatre with Aster the Starkeeper

In time, we plan to create additional experiences that will tour Omaha and beyond. These shows will be created through residencies and workshops in autism-support classrooms, and with the help of actors, designers, and writers with disabilities.

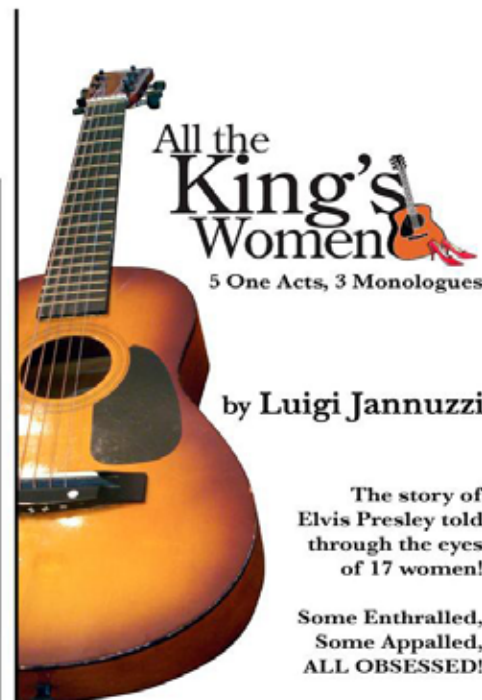
The Omaha Community Playhouse has made a commitment to provide the community with inclusive and innovative theatre experiences where everyone can feel a sense of belonging. The VROOM! Mobile Sensory Theatre is an important step towards that goal, and I look forward to seeing it continue to grow and develop. It's my dream to collaborate with other theatres to provide them with the tools to establish this program in their community, knowing that it empowers this underserved audience to experience art and theatre in ways they never thought possible.

[View the VROOM! Mobile Sensory Theatre FAQ document at aact.org/vroom]

Omaha Community Playhouse Artistic Director Stephen Santa is an award-winning theatre director whose work has been seen across the United States and internationally. Santa is the co-founder and former artistic director of Jumping Jack Theater—a children's theatre production company that creates original sensory theatre experiences for audiences with developmental disabilities and sensory sensitivities. His Omaha Community Playhouse directorial credits include Kinky Boots, School of Rock, and this season's sold-out production of RENT. Santa developed and directed VROOM! Mobile Sensory Theatre, which will tour homes and community organizations throughout Nebraska. He may be contacted at ssanta@omahaplayhouse.com



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Publisher: ConcordTheatricals.com
Playwright: LuigiJannuzzi.com

AACT Board 2023-2024

The Nominating Committee proposed and the AACT Board elected and installed the following individuals to the Board at the June 17 AACT Board meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Thank you to all applicants who applied.



Emily Anderson, Performer, Director, Volunteer at Midland Center for the Arts and Chicago's 611 Theatre Company

Region 3, Midland, Michigan

"I believe in the future of AACT, and think my greatest strength is helping to envision the path toward that future, as well as gathering the right team of people to make it a reality. I am especially passionate about connecting theatre artists through

the festival cycle and the educational opportunities that AACT offers."



Allen Ebert, Executive Director, Children's Theater of Madison

Region 3, Madison, Wisconsin

"I am where I am today because of community theatre. I have learned and honed my skills and craft by being involved with community theatre at all levels. Having been in the industry for over 28 years, I bring a passion and perspective to share while still learning from so many amazing practitioners. I have made many mistakes, but through those beautiful "oops"

have gained knowledge and understanding that I can share to maybe help others."



Jon Montgomery, Founding Member of Dead Creek Theatre Company, Co-Founder of Artists Crafting Theatre, and a Co-Founder of The Watershed Theatre

Region 6, Dodge City, Kansas

"Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) are all core values of mine. I would like to be part of building a stronger IDEA position for AACT that will ultimately infiltrate into our vast

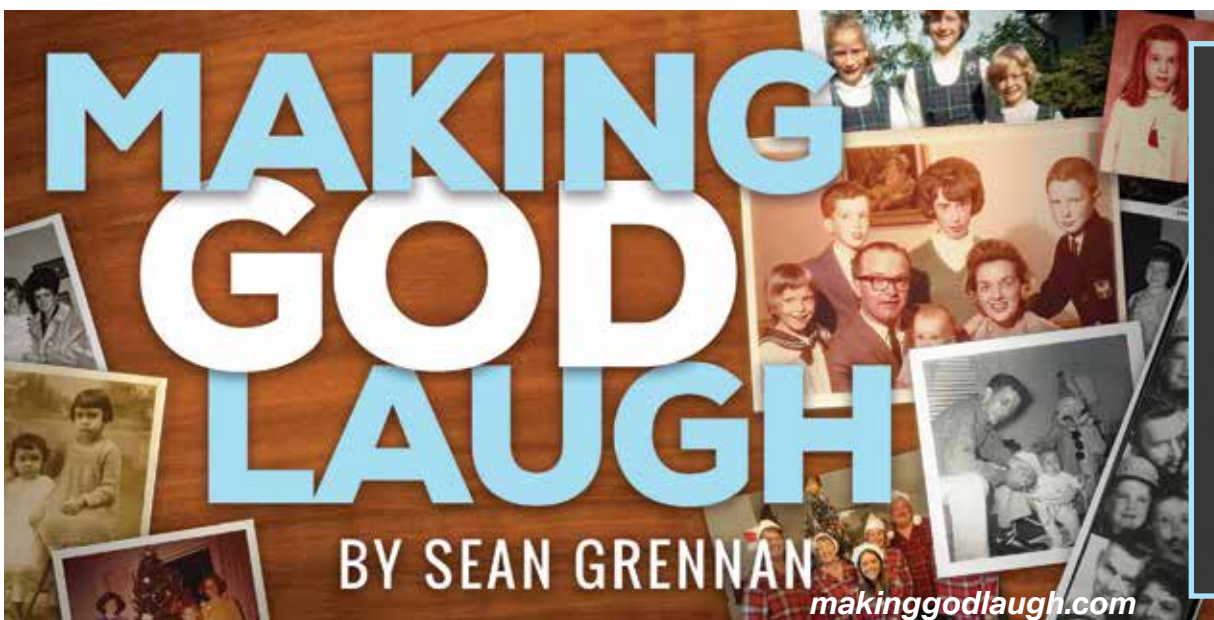
network of community theatres. In addition to this, I look forward to connecting with community theatres all over the country and be a resource to assist with their unique challenges. Community theatre really is where people from all walks of life come together over their sheer love and joy for theatre. I want to be someone that champions that cause, on a national level."



Kristi Quinn, leads the theatre and speech programs at Sergeant Bluff-Luton Community Schools. Her theatre experience includes acting, directing, set decoration, and costume design as well as public relations, grant writing, and development

Region 5, Dakota City, Nebraska

"Having served in many different community theatre roles I feel I bring an understanding of what community theatre is experiencing on varied levels. I have worked as theatre staff, volunteer, board member, and teacher. In my professional life I



"...such a moving and funny show that it would, indeed, make Him laugh."

Chicago Sun-Times

Published by Playscripts, Inc.

have worked for non-profits in both leadership and development. I understand that AACT has experienced and knowledgeable members and friends who I am not afraid to ask for help and guidance."



Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton, currently works in partnership with the Oregon Coast Council for the Arts, where she has launched new summer theatre camps for area youth. She also serves on the board of The Porthole Players, an AACT-member theatre.

Region 9, Toledo, Oregon

"I will continue to work with youth through the Youth Activities Committee. Personally, community theatre changed

my life when I was 15. I am passionate about youth theatre and AACT's future. I believe that getting youth to a festival is the first step to fostering the next generation of AACT leaders. I am also excited to become more involved in the festival cycle for Region 9 and be a support to local community theatres through AACT."

In addition, the Nomination Committee recommended and the AACT Board elected the following slate of officers:

Kristi Quinn (President)

Kristopher Geddie (Executive Vice President)

Scot MacDonald (Treasurer)

Allen Ebert (Vice President of Education)

Bob Frame (Vice President of Festivals)

Kay Armstrong was appointed to the position of Secretary by the President.

President Kristi Quinn recognized retiring board member Chad-Alan Carr for his years of service to AACT. Chad-Alan will continue to serve AACT as chair of YouthFest.

AACT is seeking volunteers to serve in a variety of positions on committees, taskforces, or as state contacts. If you would like to get more involved, please contact Quiana at quiana@aact.org

A Note from Executive Director Quiana Clark-Roland



On behalf of AACT, its members and board, I want to express our gratitude to retiring Board Secretary, Frank Peot, for his 35-plus years of service.

Frank joined as a charter member in 1986 and has been a member of numerous AACT committees, as well as serving as secretary for the AACT Board of Directors since

1990. He traveled to all board meetings to take minutes and, when needed, clarified discussions and decisions from previous sessions. He has also been instrumental in organizing and maintaining the AACT archives at the University of Wisconsin.

Frank has represented AACT at the International Amateur Theatre Association Congress and Festivals in Monaco, Norway, Korea, and Canada, and enthusiastically attended all AACTFest events. His extensive experience as an administrator, adjudicator, director, writer, and designer, has benefitted AACT and his service as president, vice president, secretary, and board member for many other arts organizations. His AACT honors include the Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award, Mort Clark International Achievement Award, and Special Recognition Award. He was also named an AACT Fellow.

For over 35 years, Frank has served as a loyal and active member of the AACT family and community. It is because of people like him that we are able to change the world through theatre. AACT will be forever grateful for that.

Thank you, Frank.

Artie's Advocacy Tip

Political Arts Advocacy

Threats to Free Artistic Expression

This past year, a number of states have introduced legislation to restrict drag performances, responding to the perceived need to "protect children" from contact with a performer in a costume that does not represent that person's assigned gender role. The most common instances, which a majority of the legislation seeks to regulate, are events that take place in libraries and schools. These are commonly known as Drag Queen Story Hours.

Currently, there are over 45 pieces of legislation in 20 states which seek to address this perceived issue. The vast majority of these will likely not become law, but rather operate as "messaging bills" that seek to show voters that legislators are responding to the perceived issue.

Whether the focus is drag productions, cabaret, or performances with drag elements, these legislative efforts have a huge impact on artists' freedom of expression. If you oppose this legislation, we encourage to contact your state legislature to express your concerns.

Americans for the Arts website has a section dedicated to legislative issues and updates surrounding drag and cabaret bills. To learn more, use this link to access that information:

aact.org/expression.

Source: Americans for the Arts

Spotlight Award



Joy Wood

of Spokane, Washington, is being honored with an AACT Spotlight Award—a reflection of her huge presence in the Spokane area since her arrival there in 2019. Stepping into the General Manager position at Stage Left Theater in February of 2020, she faced huge challenges as Covid-19 shuttered venues worldwide. Her tenacity and passion brought in grants that

helped support the company through the shutdown. She then helped transform the theatre into an on-demand streamed production site, facilitated new ticketing systems, gathered small but talented groups of performers and directors, and steered the remodeling of the small venue. A proud member of AACT, Joy's work at Stage Left Theater helped it earn the AACT 2022 Twink Lynch Organizational Achievement Award.

Her colleagues say that Joy has been instrumental in keeping theatre alive in the Spokane area. In fact, she recently began a new company in Spokane, the Lilac City Dinner Theater. The buzz around this new venture is palpable, friends say, and Lilac City Dinner Theater is well on its way to becoming a 501(c)3 in Washington State.

Joy will be presented with her Spotlight Award Certificate this fall at Stage Left Theater in Spokane.

Announced by AACT, and presented locally, AACT's Spotlight Award allows member theatres across the nation to recognize special local achievement. Any individual, organization or company is eligible. Nominations are accepted for persons of all ages. Awards may be presented anytime through the year that is appropriate. This is a fitting tribute to the hardworking volunteers, staff, and patrons of local community theatre groups—an AACT tradition and service since 2000. More information at aact.org/spotlight-award

Thank you AACT for honoring my leadership in theatrical licensing with your 1996 Distinguished Merit Award, 2002 Business Partner Award and 2009 Corporate Partner Award.

I'm so proud of my affiliation with community theatres. It's been a privilege to work closely with you over the years. By promoting unity and creating an accepting environment for debate, self-expression and interactivity, community theatre is the centerpiece to the fabric of our society; an unmatched component to the very health of our neighborhoods, towns and cities. I look forward to continuing our journey together.

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Make a Legacy Gift

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

New Roles



Florida's **Venice Theatre** announces that **Kristofer Geddie** has been named its new Executive Director. Geddie has worked as the theatre's General Manager since 2016. He first came to Venice Theatre in 2010 to play the role of Coalhouse Walker in *Ragtime*. He was hired shortly thereafter as the organization's first Director of Diversity. Under Geddie's executive leadership, Diversity, Equity

and Inclusion (DEI) will continue as a priority for the theatre, as well as its commitment to community engagement.

Geddie's predecessor, Murray Chase, who served as Executive Director since 1995, will continue working with the theatre to supervise the restoration of the main building that was severely damaged by Hurricane Ian. Chase's official title is now Restoration Supervisor

"I am humbled and honored to have been chosen as leader of this incredible organization," Geddie says. "I was awestruck in 2010 when I first saw the complexity of Venice Theatre. I'm still filled with that awe as I watch it rebuild with a sense of pride and resiliency. To have had Murray as a teacher these past 12 years is an education I never thought possible. I look forward to carrying the vision and mission of this organization into the future."

Congratulations to all those with new roles! It is wonderful to see so many additions our member theatres are making to their staff. If you have someone in a new role at your theatre, email info@aact.org to have your theatre and new staff featured in *Spotlight*.



Scot MacDonald is moving from his role as the Executive Director at the Memorial Opera House in Valparaiso, Indiana to become Managing Director of **Theatre Charlotte** in North Carolina. During his time with the opera house, MacDonald took the facility from constant financial crises to a venue offering a string of sold-out performances, and a growing youth theatre program that

recently added programming for children with disabilities. "I'm sad to leave Valparaiso and colleagues who have become dear friends, but I am so excited for the new opportunities and look forward to working with a new team of storytellers and colleagues. I feel honored and look forward to a bright future, not only in North Carolina, but for the team I've worked with in Valparaiso."

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Opportunities and Resources

Listings do not imply AACT endorsement

Theatre Education Conference

Tradewinds Resort | St. Pete Beach, FL
September 28-30, 2023

EdTA's 2023 conference will explore the power within every theatre educator to effect change in their students and the theatre education field: The Power of YOU. In a climate of increased censorship and divisive concepts laws, YOU are the best resource to build a culture of inclusivity for your students, your colleagues, and your community. YOUR spark can build a brighter future

EdTA's Theatre Education Conference is held each year to provide educators with the opportunity to meet and network with their peers during an event featuring a wide range of professional development opportunities, keynote speakers, and exhibits on the latest in theatrical technology and educational resources.

Keynote Presenters include Bliss Griffin, *Socially Conscious Programming*; Telly Leung, keynote performance by the star of Broadway's *Aladdin*, *Allegiance*, and TV's *Glee*; and Yael "YaYa" Reich, keynote presenter from Broadway's *Hadestown* and *Evita*, *Rent*, and *Mamma Mia!* on tour.

Continuing education credits are available for attendees. Most importantly, the conference offers an opportunity to connect as teachers, artists, and colleagues—learning and working together and inspiring one another to continue the shared mission of making theatre available in schools as part of a well-rounded education.

Details and registration: tec.schooltheatre.org

New Play Contests

Tennessee Williams and New Orleans Literary Festival

One-Act Play Contest 2023-2024

March 20-24, 2024

This contest is for emerging or previously unpublished playwrights. Only plays not previously published, professionally produced, or performed are eligible.

Plays should run no more than one hour in length (one act or approx. 60 pages.)

Grand Prize

- \$1,500
- Professional Staged Reading at the next Festival
- VIP All-Access Festival pass (\$600 value) for the next Festival
- Publication in *Bayou Magazine*

Finalists

The top finalists will receive a panel pass (\$100 value) to the Festival. Their names will be published the festival website, e-newsletter, and our social media pages.

Judge: Peter Hagan, former president of Dramatists Play Service

Deadline: Sunday, October 1, 10:00 PM

Details and Submission: tennesseewilliams.net

Eclectic Full Contact Theater Company The 3rd Annual Patchwork Play Festival

A One-Act New Play Festival

To be presented at The Edge Theater, 5451 N Broadway, Chicago, IL, Feb. 23, 2024 - March 3, 2024

Currently accepting submissions of New One-Act Plays that embody this years theme of: Metamorphosis

Deadline for submissions is Nov. 30, 2023

Nine finalists will have their play produced in the festival. A \$250 Award will be presented for best production as adjudicated by a panel of Chicago Theater professionals. A \$250 Audience Award will also be presented to the festival favorite as determined by audiences.

Submission Requirements:

Play must be previously unproduced. (Staged Reading are fine)

Play length not to exceed 30 minutes.

Play must reflect the yearly theme. This years theme is: Metamorphosis

Email submissions to: Patchworkplayfest@gmail.com

Details: eclectic-theatre.com

Calendar of Events

Dates	Event	St	City	Phone	Email	Web Site
September 7	AACT Virtual Masterclass: Crash Course in Stage Management	Virtual		817-732-3177 x1	winston@aact.oorg	aact.org/masterclass
September 13	AACT Industry Connection: MTI & Lively McCabe "May We All"	Virtual		817-732-3177 x1	winston@aact.org	aact.org/ic
September 19	AACT Roundtable: Building an Education Program for Adults	Virtual		817-732-3177 x1	winston@aact.org	aact.org/roundtables
October 5	AACT Script Club: <i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i>	Virtual		817-732-3177 x1	winston@aact.org	aact.org/club
October 17	AACT Roundtable: Fundraising: The Donor's Buffet	Virtual		817-732-3177 x1	winston@aact.org	aact.org/roundtables
November 2	AACT Virtual Masterclass: So You Want to Renovate a City Block of Old Buildings Into a Theatre Campus (Without Any Debt)	Virtual		817-732-3177 x1	winston@aact.org	aact.org/masterclass
November 16-18	AACT National Directors Conference	TX	San Antonio	817-732-3177 x2	info@aact.org	aact.org/ndc

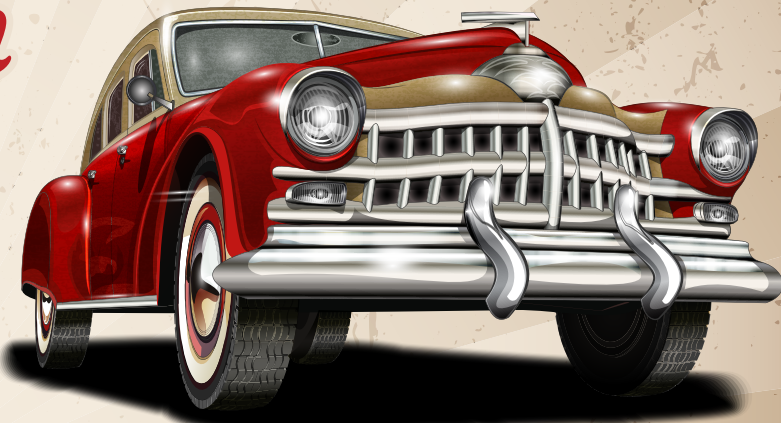
Advertisers

<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	3	Heuer Publishing <i>Serial Killer Barbie</i>	31
<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	15	Historical Emporium	43
<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	18	Luigi Jannuzzi <i>All the King's Women</i>	39
<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	28	Miracle or 2 Theatrical Licensing	27
Roger Bean <i>Jukebox Musicals of Roger Bean</i>	25	Jo Morello <i>Lil and Satchmo</i>	37
<i>Bingo (The Winnning Musical)</i>	29	MTI <i>Evil Dead the Musical</i>	11
Buddy Worldwide <i>The Buddy Holly Story</i>	17	Pioneer Drama Service <i>Murder's in the Heir</i>	24
Catherine Bush Plays	23	Plays for New Audiences	39
Peter Colley <i>I'll Be Back Before Midnight</i>	33	Plays of Wilton	13
Concord Theatricals <i>Oklahoma!</i>	5	SETC	32
Disney Theatrical Group <i>Finding Nemo Jr.</i>	6	Summerwind Productions	21
Dramatic Publishing <i>Of Men and Cars & Launch Day</i>	47	TRW <i>Jersey Boys</i>	8
Sean Grennan <i>A Rock Sails By</i>	16	TRW	20
Sean Grennan <i>Making God Laugh</i>	40	TRW	42
Heuer Publishing <i>Tears of the Soul</i>	2	Tobins Lake Studios	26

from **dpc** Dramatic Publishing

Of Men and CARS

By Jim Geoghan



If you want to have an intimate or meaningful conversation with a man, put him in a car. This semi-autobiographical play chronicles 26 years in the life of Jim and his father, who was a World War II bomber pilot. As a child, Jim thought his dad was amazing. As he grew up, he realized Dad was not as amazing as he thought and let him know it. Once an adult, Jim also realized he himself was not as amazing as he thought ... and he made it up to his dad before it was too late.

Cast size: 5 to 12m., 2 to 8w. dramaticpublishing.com/of-men-and-cars



LAUNCH DAY

(LOVE STORIES FROM THE YEAR 2108)

BY MICHAEL HIGGINS

Told through a series of two-actor scenes, this title follows six couples struggling with relationship issues in a high-tech but perilous future. These couples face challenges including a robotic arm gone rogue, advertising firms pushing products by implanting computer chips into participants' heads, genetically engineered hybrid animals like the buffadillo and pandaroo and AI supervisors that may or may not be sentient.

Cast size: 3 to 5m., 3 to 5w., 1 to 3 any gender.
dramaticpublishing.com/launch-day

Browse our entire library at: www.dramaticpublishing.com



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aact.org/ndc for information and registration