

WINTER 2023-24 \$5.00

spotlight

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

IN THIS ISSUE

Ben Cameron, #eternaltheatrekid

Embracing Neurodiversity in *Mockingbird*

AACT NewPlayFest 10th Anniversary

The AACT Advantage



Sleeping Beauty

Rise & Shine

New
Musical

Book, Music, & Lyrics by
Ken Jones, Jamey Strawn,
& Christine Jones



LICENSE
NOW

HEUER
PUBLISHING
ESTABLISHED 1988
www.HeuerPub.com

SCAN QR CODE
or Visit Heuerpub.com
to read the free script
preview and see more
info for this title.





President's Letter

Kristi Quinn
AACT President

Some mornings you lie in bed, thinking about getting up but you are absolutely, completely, dead tired. Of everything. You can't find the energy to blink. You don't want to move. Not even your little toe. You struggle out of bed. Look at

yourself in the mirror and wonder who that person is, staring back with bags under their eyes.

The morning news is on with toothsome men and perky women in sleeveless tops. Sleeveless tops! I scare small children when I wear a sleeveless top. They run and point in terror.

Then you remember what's weighing on your mind.

A fundraising event.

We all have been through those. Either you work or participate on a board or committee where someone suggests that a fundraising event would be fun. Cue the eye rolls.

But you know what? Most of the time fundraising events *are* fun. The people who attend either learn about your theatre or feel renewed again in your theatre's mission. The event can spark new involvements and raise awareness. Somehow these soirees actually raise money.

Doing them right takes work. The bottom line is these events are time-consuming labors of love. From organizing caterers, venues, prizes, decorations, entertainment, publicity, invitations, budgets, and all the loose ends, it's work. A lot of it. And it really never ends. Like keeping up with arm exercises to look decent in sleeveless

tops, you must keep at it. Whether you're a community theatre professional or volunteer, it always seems to be there.

You may research tried-and-true methods to raise money, and receive thousands of great ideas. Many of them work. However, as fundraising experts are quick to point out, pay attention to Return on Investment (ROI). In this case, the Investment is the money, time, and effort spent on putting the event together. The Return is what you expect as a result—a financial goal, or a donor or community relations goal (which prepares the way for future fundraising), or both. Truth to tell, only you can define a successful Return.

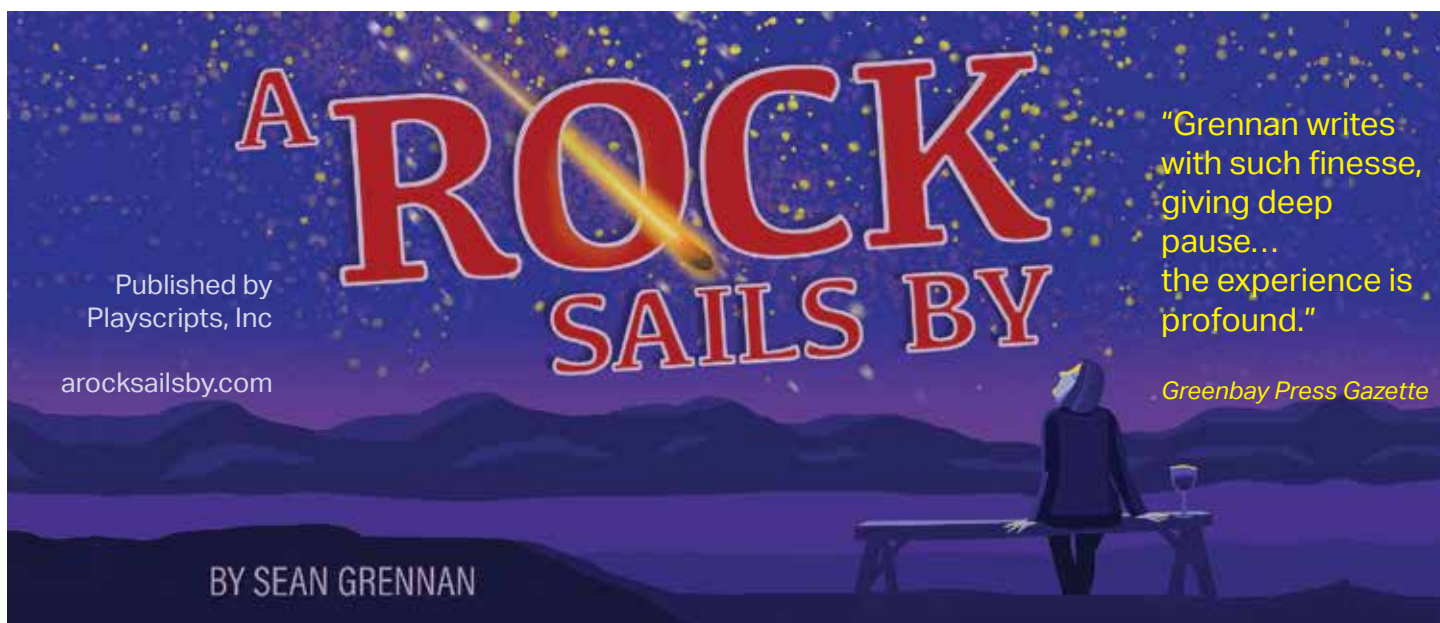
That's why it's important to view fundraising as a group activity. It works best when more than one person is responsible, when more than one person helps with implementing your plan. Remember, it is a *community* theatre. A community that works, volunteers, and plays at the theatre.

And yes, you will get tired. Bone tired. The "I never want to do another fundraiser in my life" sort of tired. But when you feel that way, go to a community theatre production. Sit in the audience and feel that throb of anticipation reverberating throughout the theatre. Listen to a high school student who experiences their first live theatre production and exclaims with awe and wonder, "Is it always like that?" (Yes, Virginia, it is. Always like that.)

Feel the rapture and you will get up and do it all again. Raise the funds. Raise the friends. Raise the awareness. Because it's all about those two words.

Community. Theatre.

And as we end the year, I hope you will support AACT with a donation at aact.org/donations.



In This Issue

Features

Ben Cameron Brings Star Power to AACTFest 2023 8

The Broadway star's keynote address and workshops were highlights of the national festival

Securing AACT's Future 10

A brief history on the growth of the AACT Endowment Fund

Embracing Neurodiversity in *Mockingbird* 12

Cast member Jessi Ball reflects on the steps taken to present *Mockingbird*'s neurodiversity with authenticity

A Decade of World Premieres: NewPlayFest Turns 10 15

Since the inaugural production in 2014, NewPlayFest has presented over 30 world premieres in 22 states, with six more set to open in 2024

Become a NewPlayFest 2026 Producing Theatre 19

Presenting the world premiere of an AACT NewPlayFest-winning play is a feather in any theatre's cap. So, why not yours? AACT is now accepting applications for Producing Theatres for AACT NewPlayFest 2026, with a deadline of February 1, 2024

The AACT Advantage 22

Deborah Burke and Sharon Houk, members from Connecticut, talk about their experiences with AACT and community theatre

Advocacy Matters 26

Advocacy for the arts and making your case for support can be a challenge, but the work is much easier—and more effective—when your theatre is perceived as a valued partner in your community

News

Announcements	7
National Award Nominations	21
World Theatre Day	24
Report from Region 4B	24
New Roles	31
AACT Corporate Partners	32
Legacy Gifts	33

Networking

President's Letter	3
Inclusivity in Theatre	28
Online Resources	30
AACT Contributors	33
Calendar	34
Advertisers	34

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:

Aleah Henderson received an Outstanding Vocal Performance Award for her performance in Star Center Theatre's (Gainesville, Florida) production of *Once on This Island JR* presented at AACT YouthFest 2023, part of AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky, in June 2023

Photo: Jolea Brown, Creative Photography

A

ANASTASIA

Book by Terrence McNally
Music by Stephen Flaherty
Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Inspired by the Twentieth Century Fox Motion Pictures by special arrangement with Buena Vista Theatrical
From the play by Marcelle Maurette as adapted by Guy Bolton

“A sweeping adventure!”

– **TimeOut New York**

Enthrall your audiences with *Anastasia*:
The Musical, the hit show about discovering
who you are and defining who you’re meant
to be: concordsho.ws/Anastasia

f @ @concordshows

concord
theatricals

RH
THEATRICALS

SAMUEL
FRENCH

Tams

THE
ALW
COLLECTION

Miss Holmes

By Christopher M. Walsh

When an anonymous note sends a newlywed wife looking for help, Miss Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Dorothy Watson work to uncover the secrets of a corrupt police inspector whose wives have a habit of turning up dead. In a time when gender roles are rigidly defined, these unconventional women challenge societal norms. This play explores the added obstacles faced by these two iconic characters if they were women.

Cast size: 5 to 10m., 4 to 8w.

www.dramaticpublishing.com/miss-holmes

Miss Holmes RETURNS

By Christopher M. Walsh

A nurse and activist finds herself on the run, wanted for murder. Pursued by authorities who choose to ignore a clear case of self-defense due to her Indian heritage and influence from sinister figures from the shadowy criminal underworld, she turns to Miss Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Dorothy Watson for help. *Miss Holmes Returns* explores the added challenges and risks faced

by these iconic Sir Arthur Conan Doyle characters if they were women, while also examining the intersections of sexism, classism and racism.

Cast size: 3 to 5m., 6 to 7w.

www.dramaticpublishing.com/miss-holmes-returns



Browse our entire library at: www.dramaticpublishing.com

AACT Board

Officers

Kristi Quinn, President

Dakota City, NE (2026)

Kristofer Geddie, Executive VP

Venice, FL (2025)

Bob Frame, VP Festivals

Skaneateles, NY (2024)

Allen Ebert, VP Education

Madison, WI (2026)

Kay Armstrong, Secretary

Dallas, TX (2025)

Scot MacDonald, Treasurer

Valparaiso, IN (2025)

Members at Large

Emily Anderson

Midland, MI (2026)

Sharon Burum

Duncan, OK (2024)

Steven H. Butler

Sarasota, FL (2025)

Martha Cherbini

Leander, TX (2024)

Michael Cochran

Paducah, KY (2024)

Rebecca Fry

Shawnee, OK (2025)

Chris Hamby

Peoria, AZ (2025)

Kelli McLoud-Schingen

Tulsa, OK (2024)

Jon Montgomery

Odessa, TX (2026)

Dorinda Toner

Portland, OR (2025)

Lou Ursone

Stamford, CT (2024)

Jennifer Van Bruggen-Hamilton

Toledo, OR (2026)

Jim Walker

Aberdeen, SD (2024)

Region Representatives

Beverley Lord

Foxborough, MA (ex officio)

Frances Ruoff

Breezy Point, NY (2025)

Jamie Peterson

Escanaba, MI (2025)

Lynn Nelson

Tupelo, MS (ex officio)

Kristy Meanor

Wetumpka, AL (2024)

Jamie Ulmer

Beatrice, NE (2025)

Justin Pike

Little Rock, AR (2026)

John Lyttle

Cheyenne, WY (2025)

Marc Edson

Chico CA (2024)

Jon Douglas Rake

Tacoma, WA (ex officio)

Dane Winters

Germany (US Army) (2024)

AACT Staff

Quiana Clark-Roland

Executive Director

David Cockerell

Marketing/Communications Director

David A. VanCleave

Education Director

NewPlayFest Dramaturg

Karen Matheny

Membership Coordinator

Winston Daniels

Operations and Events Assistant

Jill Patchin

Corporate Partners Manager

Stephen Peithman

Webmaster/Spotlight Assistant Editor

Mary Jo DeNolf

Festivals/Engagements Coordinator

Amy Scheidegger Ducos

Digital Marketing Administrator

Upcoming Events

AACT Webinars

aact.org/webinars

AACT NewPlayFest 2024 Premieres

Criminal Mischief, by William Cameron

The Sauk, Jonesville, Michigan

February 2 -11

thesauk.org

The Red Flags, by Catherine Castellani

Verona Area Community Theater, Verona, Wisconsin

February 8 -17

vact.org

I Thought I Knew You, by Philip J. Kaplan

Stage Left Theater, Spokane, Washington

March 22 - April 7

stagelefttheater.org

AACT Board of Directors and Committee Winter Meetings

Courtyard San Diego Old Town

San Diego, California

February 23 - 24, 2024

aact.org/winter

World Theatre Day 2024

March 27

world-theatre-day.org

USITT 2024 Conference & Expo

Seattle, Washington

March 20-23

usitt.org/conference24

AACT Board of Directors and Committee Summer Meetings

Grand Rapids, Michigan

June 21- 22, 2024

Details TBD

aact.org/summer

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

Spotlight Editorial Team: Quiana Clark-Roland, Michael Cochran, Mary Doveton, Kristofer Geddie, Stephen Peithman, Katrina Ploof, Dorinda Toner, Lou Ursone, David A. VanCleave

Content Contributors: Samiha Ayoub, Jessi Ball, Deborah Burke, BroadwayPlus, Jolea Brown/Creative Photography, Martha Cherbini, Quiana Clark-Roland, Michael Cochran, David Cockerell, Jim Covault, Julie Crawford, Winston Daniels, Mary Jo DeNolf, Amy Scheidegger Ducos, Tonya Forbes, Kristofer Geddie, Sharon Houk, Linda Lee, Karen Matheny, Kristy Meanor, Jill Patchin, Stephen Peithman, Players by the Sea, Dorinda Toner, Kristi Quinn, Steve Strickland/Strickly Photography, Lou Ursone, David A. VanCleave, world-theatre-day.org, Delvina Wynn

Design and Layout: Jim Covault
Volume 39 No. 2 © 2023 American Association of Community Theatre, All Rights Reserved

Ben Cameron Brings Star Power to AACTFest 2023

#eternaltheatrekid

One of the many highlights at AACTFest 2023 was the keynote address from Broadway's Ben Cameron. Sponsored by our partners at BroadwayPlus, Ben's #eternaltheatrekid presentation was a hilarious exploration of the love/hate relationship with unitards, a journey through backstage memories ranging from

In addition to the keynote, Cameron also presented two workshops for AACTFest attendees. Youth participants loved the opportunity to receive feedback and coaching on their musical theatre audition cuts. Participants of all ages took advantage of learning original Broadway choreography from *Wicked*. It wasn't a surprise that many attendees listed Cameron's presentations as some of their AACTFest highlights.

To make the event even more special, the keynote address was delivered on Ben's birthday. On TikTok that morning, Cameron shared, "I feel such a sense of gratitude...I am struck with just how incredible it is to have the opportunity to spend my birthday sharing my love for theatre with my people. It is really profound."

Throughout the week, Ben reminded us all to "Keep following your dreams, my friends. Carve your own path. Things are happening exactly the way they're supposed to."



Peter Pan presented in a shopping mall to the original Broadway production of *Wicked*, and an inspiring and heartfelt testament to the transformative power of community theatre.

"Having the opportunity to connect with theatre makers from all over the country at AACTFest was a profound experience for me," Cameron told BroadwayPlus. "I was an active community theatre actor, like most Broadway artists, and it was so special to celebrate the amazing work being done on the community theatre level. After all, we're all just #theatrekids at heart."



Ben Cameron appeared on Broadway in the original casts of *Wicked* and *Footloose*, as well as in *Aida*, plus tours of *Sweet Charity* (opposite Molly Ringwald), *State Fair*, *Fame*, *The Who's Tommy*, and *Footloose*. Since hanging up his dance belt, he has become one of Broadway's most beloved personalities as creator and host of the long-running variety show, *Broadway Sessions* (2018 MAC Award); the Broadway Buskers concert series with the Times Square Alliance; the web series, *Dance Captain Dance Attack* on Broad-

continued on page 10 ▶



The Holiday Celebration of Aging



You'll never again think of The Little Drummer Boy in the same way!



STAGE RIGHTS A Member of the Broadway Licensing Family
www.StageRights.com



LET YOUR STORY SING

The Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge, presented by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with the National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT), is an opportunity for high school students all across the country to develop and showcase musical compositions that could be part of a musical theater production.

Submissions will be judged by a panel of leaders in the musical theater field — including NAMT members and Festival of New Musicals Alumni Writers, among others — who will select the Challenge’s winning writers/writing teams. Those writers will be invited to New York City in June 2024 to work with mentors, culminating in a concert of their songs.

TIMELINE

Early September, 2023:

Applications open

September—November, 2023:

Online workshops

Early December, 2023:

Applications due

January—March, 2024:

Applicants receive feedback and a chance to revise and re-submit songs

Late Spring, 2024:

Winners selected

June, 2024:

Concert of selected pieces in New York City!



LEARN MORE
AND RISE TO THE
CHALLENGE!

namt.org/challenge

**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT** for the **ARTS**
arts.gov

NAMT

**NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR
MUSICAL THEATRE**

wayWorld.com, and the hit podcast, *The Broadway Cast*, with iHeartRadio Broadway. Cameron is also the MainStage host for BroadwayCon and was a live audience host for tapings of both *A Very Wicked Halloween* on NBC and *The Spongebob Musical* on Nickelodeon. He is a frequent face on PBS WNET, having hosted *Hamilton's America*, *Broadway on Thirteen Marathon*, and the *Downton Abbey New Year's Marathon*. He recently made his return to the stage as the "Man in Chair" in *The Drowsy Chaperone*

and starred as "Mr. Finch" in Broadway Green Alliance's online presentation of *You're a Green One, Mr. Finch*, alongside Idina Menzel. He has enjoyed sold-out engagements of his one-man show, *Different Is Good*, in New York City and beyond. Cameron is also a sought-after writer, director, performer, and choreographer, who travels the world, teaching high-energy theatre and dance masterclasses, and emceeing Onstage NY talent competitions. Follow Ben Cameron via @BenDoesBroadway or visit bencameron.nyc.

Securing AACT's Future

A brief history on the growth of the AACT Endowment Fund

Martha Cherbini, AACT Board Member
Endowment Committee Chair

Cruising down the Ohio River at sunset aboard the *Belle of Louisville* steamboat during AACTFest 2023 will be remembered for many things. Some include the faithfully preserved river boat boarded at the downtown dock, the Louisville-style brisket served at the buffet dinner, and the entertainment by the cast of *The Marvelous Wonderettes* from the nearby Highview Arts Center.

But the underlying purpose of the cruise was as a fundraiser for the AACT Endowment. Participants in the cruise raised

\$4,000 and pledged another \$22,000 for the benefit of the Endowment Fund that night. Other activities at AACTFest 2023 (Peoples' Choice Award and Silent Auction) raised an additional \$10,000, thanks to the hard work of AACT staff and Endowment Committee members—and the generosity of festival attendees. Now that's something to remember!

With start-up funding in 1994 of \$60,000 from the Community Theatre Foundation (a separate legal entity), the AACT Endowment has grown over the last 30 years into a healthy, sustaining fund of just over \$500,000, all the while continuing to fulfill its purpose of support for festival entries.

The Endowment was set up with two goals. The first was to assist community theatres with the expenses incurred in taking part in AACTFest. During AACTFest 2023, participating companies each received \$3,795 to facilitate their travel to Louisville. The second goal was to contribute to operating expenses for AACT. Those funds have grown and are being managed to ensure that AACT is able to fulfill its mission of "Helping Theatres Thrive"—in good times and bad. The last three years have made clear the need for financial security to maintain a viable organization when unpredictable crises arise. In the nonprofit world, conventional wisdom is that the best indicator of a financially healthy organization is a well-managed and well-funded endowment—exactly what the AACT Endowment is all about.

In support of the Endowment, the Legacy Society is an organization whose membership is open to anyone who believes in the goals of AACT and wants to help it continue to meet those goals. Members agree to contribute a minimum of \$5,000, either as a one-time gift, a pledge over a period of up to five years, or by making a gift as part of an estate plan.

If you have any questions about the AACT Endowment Fund, the Legacy Society, or wish to show your support for AACT and its mission by making a donation, visit the AACT website at aact.org/endowment, or contact Quiana Clark-Roland at quiana@aact.org



"It's the perfect time for a big dose of Roger Bean!"

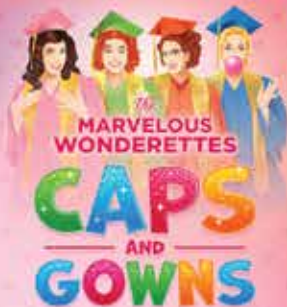
THE ORANGE COUNTY
REGISTER

The Marvelous
Wonderettes



Also Available: Large Cast "Slee Club Edition"

THE MARVELOUS
WONDERETTES
CAPS
AND
GOWNS



Winter
Wonderettes



The MARVELOUS
WONDERETTES
Dream
On



HONKY
TONK
Laundry



The Jukebox Musicals of Roger Bean

Available Exclusively From
BROADWAY
LICENSING

COMING SOON:

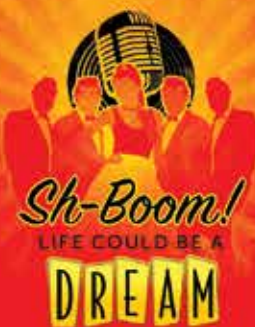
Drag
The Marvelous
Wonderettes



Sh-Boom!
A CHRISTMAS
MIRACLE



Sh-Boom!
LIFE COULD BE A
DREAM



ROUTE
66



THE
ANDREWS
Brothers



Summer
of LOVE



Why do
FOOLS
Fall in
LOVE?



Artwork by Subplot Studio



Embracing Neurodiversity in *Mockingbird*

Jessi Ball

When I first auditioned for *Mockingbird* at Blue Springs City Theatre Youth Company, my knowledge of the show was limited. I knew the play was adapted from a book and touched upon heavy topics, including autism, but that was all. Additionally, the demanding schedule from combining my junior and senior years of high school into one year almost deterred me from auditioning. Looking back, however, I am immensely grateful I took the leap and embraced this extraordinary opportunity.

The journey began during our first rehearsal, when the cast gathered to read through the entire script of *Mockingbird*, by Julie Jensen, adapted from the National Book Award-winning novel by Kathryn Erskine. Following this, we were assigned homework—to immerse ourselves in the original book and engage with works such as Naoki Higashida's *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy with Autism*. This initial dive into understanding the world of those with autism set the stage for a profound exploration of neurodiversity.

As we began to discover and embody our characters, the director introduced us to a remarkable woman whose son is on the autism spectrum. Due to differences in the brain, people with autism spectrum disorder may behave, communicate,

interact, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. That's what's meant by "neurodiversity."

The mother's presence and guidance were transformative. She shared insights into how a parent might effectively navigate interactions with their child, ensuring their comfort and avoiding triggers. Her wisdom and experiences enlightened us, demonstrating how to respect boundaries, as when the play's central character, Caitlin, shows discomfort with physical touch, and an aversion to multi-colored clothing. Through the mother's insights, we gained a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities of the neurodiverse experience. This was especially true for me in my role as Caitlin's dad.

The production reached even greater heights when one of our stage managers brought a friend to rehearsal who happened to be on the autism spectrum, as well. This introduced us to another incredible individual with firsthand insight. As they watched the show, their observations and notes provided invaluable guidance to the director, informing the portrayal of Caitlin's actions. Furthermore, they engaged in heartfelt conversations with our lead, Risa Norbury, offering advice on how someone with autism might stim (make repetitive or unusual movements or noises) or move and respond to loud noises or physical contact. The friend's eloquence and insightful

continued on page 14 ▶

Jolea Brown, Creative Photography



The third national AACT YouthFest was part of AACTFest 2023 National Theatre Festival held in Louisville, Kentucky, June 12-17, 2023. Five youth companies performed in the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts' Bomhard Theatre delighting the AACTFest audience with exciting productions. All YouthFest 2023 participants gathered on the Bomhard Theatre stage as they were congratulated for presenting quality productions and demonstrating the future of community theatre.

SHOWS THAT APPRECIATE THE ADULT IN ALL OF US.

Ideal for your cast, ideal for your audience.



TRW
Theatrical Rights Worldwide

Theatricalrights.com | 646-736-3232



@trwshows



Jessi Ball and Risa Norbury in the Blue Springs City Theatre Youth Company production of *Mockingbird* at YouthFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky

comparisons of elements in the play to their daily experiences deepened our understanding in ways we had never imagined.

The contributions of these remarkable individuals, alongside the diversity within our own cast were active in making our production of *Mockingbird* truly exceptional and authentic. Our collective goal was to create a performance that would be a celebration of neurodiversity and a respectful portrayal of the experiences of individuals with autism. Through the guidance we received, we navigated uncharted territories, striving to be as genuine and empathetic as possible.

Looking back, I am certain that without the extraordinary presence and insights of that mother and the stage manager's friend, our production would not have achieved the level of

honesty it ultimately attained. *Mockingbird* became a testament to the power of community theatre in fostering understanding and celebrating diversity. It served as a reminder that by embracing neurodiversity, we can create spaces where everyone's voice can be heard and appreciated.

Jessi Ball is a Missourian artist, model, writer, and actor who can be seen on the stage and screen. They have participated in a number of shows including Willy Wonka (Violet Beauregarde), 13 The Musical (Charlotte), Mockingbird (Dad), and many more. They have appeared in Amazon Prime Films such as DealBreaker and Promise Chronicles: Manifestation, as well as other works such as the drama Counteract and the music video Thomas Shelby, a Strange Music production. They perform regularly in Enchanted Forest, Living Windows, and other events in the Kansas City area. Jessi is also a novel writer with a dozen works in progress, a commissioning artist, a special effects makeup artist, a model, and a cosplayer. They were very grateful to have been given this opportunity and would like to thank AACT for everything.

Editor's Note: Mockingbird, presented by Missouri's Blue Springs City Theatre Youth Company, was performed at AACT YouthFest 2023, in Louisville, Kentucky. Both Risa Norbury (Caitlin) and Jessi Ball (Dad) won awards for Outstanding Achievement in Acting, and Alison Salley (Michael) received the award for Standout Performance from an Ensemble Member. The entire production was honored for Outstanding Technical Achievement.

From the **CREATORS OF MARY POPPINS AND HONK!**
COMES THE
ENCHANTING FAMILY MUSICAL

BOOK BY OSCAR-WINNING SCREENWRITER
JULIAN FELLOWES

SONGS BY THE OLIVIER AWARD-WINNING TEAM
GEORGE STILES AND ANTHONY DREWE

AACT members, enter code MISTERTOAD on your license application to **RECEIVE 10% OFF!**

TRW Theatricalrights.com | 646-736-3232
 @trwshows

HISTORICAL EMPORIUM

Period Clothing

Full Line In Stock

- Victorian
- Edwardian
- Regency
- Old West
- Steampunk

Superb Service

- Attentive Staff
- Quick Shipping
- Easy Returns

Buy for the price of renting
800-997-4311

HistoricalEmporium.com

A Decade of World Premieres: NewPlayFest Turns 10



AACT's NewPlayFest launched ten years ago, when the world premiere of *Exit Laughing*, by Paul Elliott opened at Springfield Little Theatre in Springfield, Missouri, on November 15, 2014. Since that inaugural production, NewPlayFest has presented over 30 world premieres in 22 states, with six more set to open in 2024.



Tonya Forbes

Nanette Crighton, Judy Luxton, and Sandy Skoglund-Young in the AACT NewPlayFest world premiere production of Paul Elliott's Exit Laughing at Springfield Little Theatre in Springfield, Missouri

While the first production premiered in 2014, the genesis of NewPlayFest really began several years earlier—and all because of a simple email.

In 2010, one of AACT's individual members emailed the national office, asking what the association could do to assist playwrights in getting their original scripts produced. After presenting the request at the October 2010 AACT Board of

Directors meeting, then-president Rod McCullough created the Playwrights Services Task Force, charged with developing a forum or online listing for playwrights to connect with theatre organizations who produce new works.

Julie Crawford, AACT's Executive Director at the time, said "The uphill battle is getting theatres to do new work. If the theater brings in a playwright and does a premiere, it gives them bragging rights. It should give them a little more pull in getting people in and benefit community theatres as well as the playwrights."

Linda Lee was part of the initial task force and was instrumental in developing NewPlayFest. As she recalls, "We talked about doing something on the website, we could do this, we could have a listing here, we could have promotion there." But that didn't seem to be enough, and the task force wondered how to ensure fully realized productions of the new scripts.

Fortunately, Lee was then Executive Director of Texas Nonprofit Theatres (TNT), which operated a Production of Original Plays (POPS) contest every two years, resulting in staged readings of the winning scripts.

"I offered [AACT's task force] suggestions based on how we did it and what our guidelines were," she said, and the Playwrights Services Task Force made a recommendation to the Board for a similar contest that would result in fully-staged productions across the country.

In June 2011, the Board accepted the recommendation and shortly thereafter, Dramatic Publishing Company entered into a partnership with AACT to produce an anthology of the winning plays. This was a major development, for Dramatic Publishing also agreed to include all the winning plays in its

continued on page 16 ▶

Thirty Saints Productions

Jukebox Musicals, Original Live Shows and Music Licensing

thirtysaintsproductions.com
[@thirtysaintsproductions](https://www.instagram.com/thirtysaintsproductions)

catalogue and to license performance rights across the United States, and beyond. Linda Habjan, Dramatic Publishing Vice-President of Acquisitions, recalls, “this focused on providing new material for the community theatre market and also bringing attention to the theatre involved in the world premiere of an award-winning show and giving the work a better chance to reach future audiences. Over 200 scripts were submitted for the first competition. The scripts were reviewed by a team of 32 volunteer readers who, through a strategic rating system, culled them down to the top 12. Those 12 were sent to the six producing theatres—carefully selected by AACT from the dozens of applicants. Each theatre submitted its top picks, the winners were selected, and the announcement was made at AACTFest 2013 in Carmel, Indiana.

But when Linda Lee walked onto the stage to announce the winning plays, playwrights, and theatres, she added a touching surprise, causing a collective gasp throughout the banquet hall. Her late father’s cousin, Jack. K. Ayre of Sunnyvale, California, had recently passed away and left a large estate. She and her siblings decided it would be a fitting tribute to Jack to use a portion of the estate to help finance the premiere productions.

“My father [Frank Ayre Lee] and his cousin [Jack K. Ayre] used to write letters back and forth,” Lee said. “They’d actually write limericks, and short plays back and forth. They were both prolific writers. In his younger years, Jack was involved in community theatre in New England and Dad was a big theatre fan. He attended AACTFest in 2011, and was so impressed with the organization and the work we were doing.”

Lee and her siblings agreed that NewPlayFest was a unique way to honor their legacy. It also became a family thing, since siblings have been able to attend a number of the world premieres over the years.

Taking It to the Next Level

When Kathy Pingel was directing *Get Out of Dodge* at Venice Theatre during the second NewPlayFest, Venice Executive Director Murray Chase arranged for the playwright to come in and work with the director and actors prior to opening. It was an incredible benefit for the cast, playwright, and overall production.

“Once a play is published, you accept that you’re bound to the words on the page,” Pingel said. “But before publication, new play development can and should be collaborative.”



Steve Strickland, Strickly Photography

Clair Wilson (Jeanna Vickery) presents her casserole creation to husband Leonard Wilson (Brad Wm Ooley) and daughter Erica Wilson (Lindsay Eng) in the world premiere production of Casserole, by Pamela Harbaugh at Boise Little Theater in Boise, Idaho

After AACT received her feedback and that of other playwrights, it hired Pingel as Festival Dramaturg for the 2020 cycle. Each producing theatre agreed to bring their playwright in for a three-day workshop prior to performances.

With the experience as adjudicator, director, and editor, Pingel was ready for the challenge.

“Playwrights are the best advocates for their work, and theatres are great advocates for their productions” she explained. “But someone needs to be the advocate for the story. Getting a script ready for production really comes down to diagnosing any problems—is it the script? The staging? The timing? That’s hard to do without active collaboration.”

Pam Harbaugh’s *Casserole* was the first play to include the role of NewPlayFest Dramaturg. Boise Little Theater produced the premiere in October 2019, directed by Wendy Koeppel. After the successful opening, Koeppel reflected on the positive workshop experience: “The production team, cast, and I started the whole process with the workshop process in mind, so we were prepared for whatever came our way. And what came our way was a wonderful collaboration between playwright Pam, AACT Dramaturg Kathy Pingel, the cast, the crew, and me.”

She celebrated how positive and open Pingel and Harbaugh were to their thoughts, ideas, and concerns, noting that “during the workshop, we played. We tried new ideas, and had to let other ideas go. We had laughs, frustrations, and ah-ha

moments. The end result was wondrous, and more meaningful to all of us than anyone imagined it would be. The original excitement continued, the intrigue became inspiration, and the nervousness became gratitude—gratitude to have been involved with wonderful people, bringing a wonderful play to life.”

Harbaugh shared Koeppel’s enthusiasm. “Wendy was exceedingly generous and gracious in listening to our every concern. She’d take suggestions and work on them, then take rewrites and work those in with her cast. How many directors could do that and still maintain a sincere smile?”

Because of the added dramaturg and workshop components, the final scripts are tighter and more polished by the time they are printed and licensed through Dramatic Publishing Company. For some, like Michael Higgins’ *Launch Day* (*Love Stories from the Year 2108*), this means additional productions.

Following the play’s world premiere at Theatre Tuscaloosa, playwright Higgins agreed that the dramaturg workshop was invaluable, explaining that “by the end of the workshop, we all




Rebissa (Jessica Briana Kelly) and Vander (DeAnthony Mays) discuss their future in *Launch Day* (*Love Stories from the Year 2108*), by Michael Higgins at AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky

had a solid grasp of what the production could be.”

He expressed his gratitude to “collaborators who spot every issue and offer not just critiques, but possible solutions. At the same time, they’re careful to leave all final decisions in the hands of the playwright.”

The final results speak for themselves. Theatre Tuscaloosa’s premiere production of *Launch Day* (*Love Stories from the Year 2108*) advanced through state and regional competitions, then was performed at AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky, and

THE WORLDWIDE SMASH-HIT MUSICAL



**BRING A
ROCKIN' GOOD
TIME TO YOUR
THEATRE!**
 AMATEUR &
PROFESSIONAL
RIGHTS
AVAILABLE

Buddy

**THE
BUDDY
HOLLY
STORY**

**‘A DARN TOOTIN’ GOOD TIME.
YOU’LL HAVE A BLAST’**
 CHICAGO TRIBUNE

License your production at buddythemusical.com

Featuring over 20 hit songs from the golden era
of Rock & Roll, including:

THAT’LL BE THE DAY • EVERYDAY • NOT FADE AWAY • PEGGY SUE
 OH BOY • TRUE LOVE WAYS • MAYBE BABY • RAVE ON
 WORDS OF LOVE • SHOUT • CHANTILLY LACE
 RAINING IN MY HEART • LA BAMBA • JOHNNY B. GOODE • MANY MORE!

**‘SENDS PEOPLE OUT OF THE THEATER ON
AN UNSTOPPABLE HIGH. SENSATIONAL’**
 THE BOSTON GLOBE

Licensing enquiries and perusals:
 email rick.thorne@buddyshow.com
 or through
buddythemusical.com/request-licence
 tel: 01144 207 240 9941
 © Buddy Worldwide Limited
 P.O. Box 293 • Letchworth Garden City • SG6 9EU • United Kingdom

continued on page 18 ▶

has new productions scheduled this year, from New York to Tennessee.

What Next?

After five successful cycles, the future of NewPlayFest looks bright, indeed. When asked what she wants for the future of NewPlayFest, Linda Lee said, "We limit it to six plays right now. That's a good number, but I'd love to see more. Maybe that means more plays each cycle, or maybe it means scheduled second productions of each play. I don't know, but over the years I've seen just extraordinary performances. And I want to see more."

While no one knows yet what productions will be chosen for NewPlayFest 2026, it's certain we can look forward to six more extraordinary world premieres.

Criminal Mischief, by William Cameron

The Sauk, Jonesville, Michigan

thesauk.org

World Premiere: February 1-11, 2024

The Red Flags, by Catherine Castellani

Verona Area Community Theater, Verona, Wisconsin

vact.org

World Premiere: February 8-17, 2024

I Thought I Knew You, by Philip J. Kaplan

Stage Left Theater, Spokane, Washington

stagelefttheater.org

World Premiere: March 22-April 7, 2024

Eating Blackberries, by Pam Harbaugh

Hickory Community Theatre, Hickory, North Carolina

hickorytheatre.org

World Premiere: April 5-20, 2024

Tennessee Wet Rub, by Kim E. Ruyle

Cottage Theatre, Cottage Grove, Oregon

cottage theatre.org

World Premiere: August 9-25, 2024

The China Shop, by Richard Manley

Lincoln Community Playhouse, Lincoln, Nebraska


lincolnplayhouse.com

World Premiere: Fall 2024

AACT NewPlayFest 2024 is sponsored in part by the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation, and Dramatic Publishing Company.



"FROM CALIFORNIA TO AUSTRALIA,
this play rocks!"



All the
**King's
Women**
5 One Acts, 3 Monologues

by Luigi Jannuzzi

The story of
Elvis Presley told
through the eyes
of 17 women!

Some Enthrilled,
Some Appalled,
ALL OBSESSED!

A CONCORD THEATRICALS COMPANY
SAMUEL FRENCH

Publisher: ConcordTheatricals.com
Playwright: LuigiJannuzzi.com

Become a NewPlayFest 2026 Producing Theatre



Presenting the world premiere of an AACT NewPlayFest-winning play is a feather in any theatre's cap. So, why not yours?

As we celebrate the NewPlayFest's 10th anniversary, AACT and its program partners are both proud and excited to see the positive and lasting impact it has had on playwrights and community theatres across the nation. It's an exciting process and an artistic adventure that will energize and inspire your company, your patrons, and the greater community theatre industry.

AACT is now accepting applications for Producing Theatres for AACT NewPlayFest 2026. The deadline to apply is February 1, 2024. Producing Theatres will receive a \$4,000 grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation. You'll find the application form online at aact.org/newplay26. Since the application process requires letters of recommendation, the sooner you can start your application the better. If you need further guidance, contact the AACT office at 817-732-3177 or info@aact.org.

How It Works

Six AACT-member theatres will be chosen to produce the winning plays selected by a team of AACT reviewers. Producing Theatres will then read the scripts that make it to the final round and select the winning shows they will produce.

NewPlayFest 2026 productions will take place between June 2025 and December 2026. Producing Theatres will be chosen well in advance, to allow them time to schedule the workshop and the world premiere production as part of their regular season.

As part of AACT NewPlayFest, your theatre would play a vital role in many ways. By producing a world premiere new play, you contribute to the future development of that work by helping the playwright determine what works or doesn't work on stage. The interpretations of your director and cast may reveal insights into the work that even the playwright didn't know were there, allowing the author to make the play even more effective.

To improve the festival process for both theatre and playwright, Producing Theatres will host a workshoping of the production. For questions about the festival workshoping component, contact AACT Dramaturg David A. VanCleave at dvancleave@aact.org.

To learn more about what being a NewPlayFest Producing Theatre includes, visit aact.org/newplay26 to review the application, criteria, and details.



In keeping with AACT's commitment to advancing the artistic quality and creative process for community theatres and artists, winning plays are published in an anthology by Dramatic Publishing Company, with the name of each Producing Theatre, director, and cast prominently displayed. (See aact.org/books for a list of current anthologies.)



It's an exciting, rewarding experience—and your theatre can be part of it.

Playwrights & Reviewers

Submit a Script

Playwrights may submit scripts for AACT NewPlayFest 2026 during May and June, 2024. Details for script submission will be available soon at aact.org/newplay26. Only non-musical, full-length plays will be accepted. In addition, scripts must be unpublished and must not have received a fully staged production. (If selected, the AACT theatre's production is to be a world premiere.) Only one script per playwright will be accepted. There are no fees for AACT-member playwrights; non-members pay a \$10 script processing fee. For more information and script formatting guidelines, visit aact.org/newplay26.

Be a Reviewer

Volunteer Reviewers play an important role in AACT NewPlayFest 2026, reading and scoring submitted scripts in several rounds of evaluations. If you'd like to be a part of this exciting process as a Reviewer, you'll find an application form and more information at aact.org/newplay26.



From George Gershwin
to Beyoncé!

From World War One
to Afghanistan.

The Pin-Up Girls

by James Hindman
and Jeffrey Lodin

A cavalcade of hits
inspired by real letters
from our troops overseas!



**SOLD OUT
THE ENTIRE RUN!**

—Casa Manana Theatre

A big red-lipstick kiss
to our overseas veterans,
then and now!

—North Texas, Theater Jones

BROADWAY
LICENSING

DPS  SW **BOD**

The BIKINIS!

Back
together.
AGAIN!!



"A tidal wave of fun!"

—GOODSPEED
MUSICALS

Contact: www.miracleor2.com

**2 Actors
21 wacky
Characters**

**1 HUGE
Broadway
Hit!**



POPCORN FALLS

POPULATION:
UNHINGED

BY JAMES HINDMAN

"A FEEL GOOD SHOW!" - New York Times

"LAUGH OUT LOUD COMIC GENIUS!" - Broadway World

concord
theatricals

FOR MORE INFO, VISIT:

concordsho.ws/PopcornFalls

AACT National Awards Nominations

Closes January 20, 2024

AACT National Awards are presented each year to recognize outstanding contributions to community theatre. Nominations are accepted for persons of all ages. Nomination deadline is **January 20, 2024**.

Jolea Brown, Creative Photography



Misty Shipman of the Shoalwater Bay Tribe, Washington, accepts the 2023 Special Recognition Award from AACT Board member Dorinda Toner in June, during the National Awards Ceremony at AACTFest 2023 in Louisville, Kentucky

Anyone may nominate a candidate for a National Award. To submit a nomination uniquely suited to your theatre “hero,” visit **aact.org/national** for criteria for each award, a list of previous award recipients, and the online nomination form.

AACT bestows 10 major recognitions, each focused on a different area of service, to honor those who have contributed significantly to community theatre nationwide:

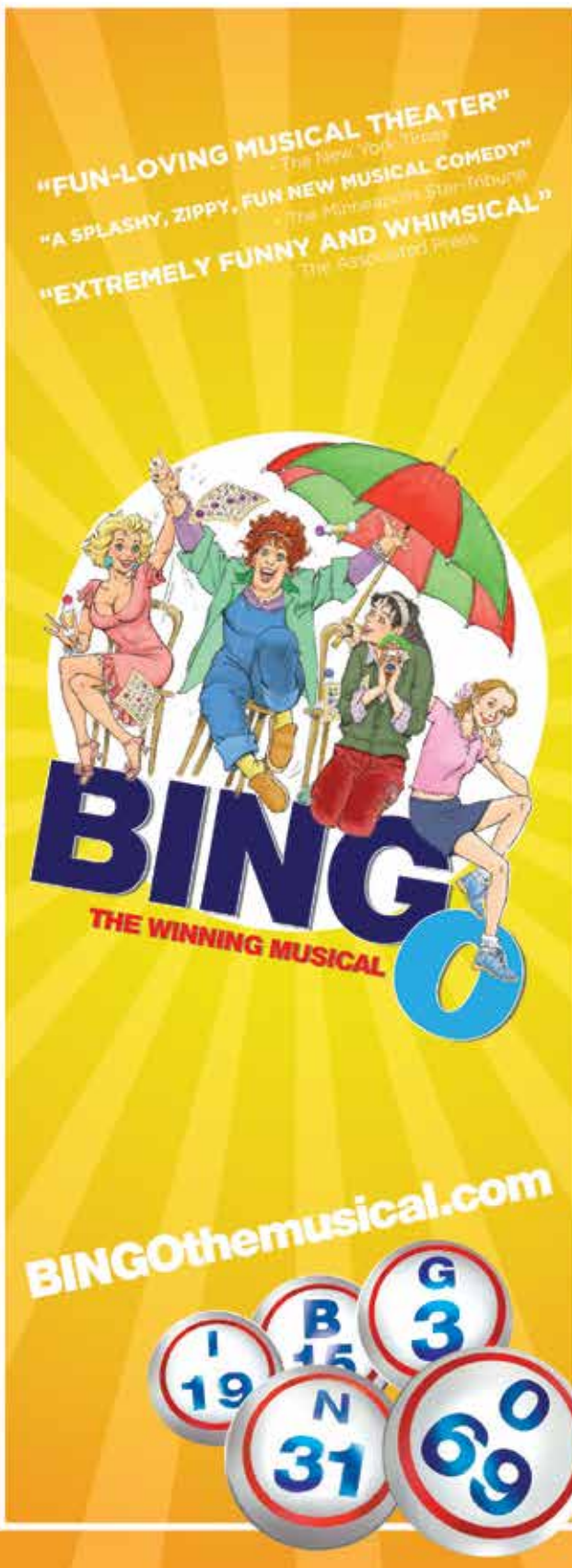
- Art Cole Lifetime of Leadership Award
- David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award
- Diamond Crown Organization Award
- Distinguished Merit Award
- Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award
- Mort Clark International Achievement Award
- Shining Star Award
- Special Recognition Award
- Twink Lynch Organizational Achievement Award
- Corporate Award

While all nominations are welcome, the AACT Awards Committee encourages community theatres to consider nominating individuals of any age for those awards whose criteria are based on merit rather than age or length of service.

Spotlight Award

Nominations are welcome anytime for the AACT Spotlight Award, presented locally by AACT and an AACT-member theatre for long or special service with a significant impact on the quality of local theatre. Nominations are accepted for persons of all ages. For more details and to submit a Spotlight Award nomination, visit **aact.org/spotlight-award**.

**PERFORMANCE AND STREAMING RIGHTS
AT CONCORDTHEATRICALS.COM**



The AACT Advantage

Lou Ursone, Executive Director of Curtain Call, Inc. of Stamford, Connecticut—and a member of the Spotlight Editorial Team—asks theatre women from his state why they are part of AACT.



DEBORAH BURKE

Town Players

New Canaan, Connecticut

Starting out as an actress at the local community theatre, within a few years I found my way, as one does, to expand my involvement. This led me to another community theatre, the all-volunteer, Town Players of New Canaan, Connecticut, where I became costumer, props master, set designer and decorator, sound designer, director and producer—and most recently, President and Creative Director.

The problem was that I had no knowledge of the skills I needed for any of these positions. And that is where AACT becomes so important to people like me, who need to learn “on the job” and learn quickly. There is really no other place where I can gather information on so many various topics through online seminars, and be able to ask questions of those who have already been where I am. AACT has been a lifeline to problem solving, and helped me to grow, which in turn has allowed my theatre to flourish.

Community theatre brings people together from all walks of life who may not have the knowledge, but have the burning desire to be part of the theatre arts, and part of a truly welcoming family. AACT is a stellar organization that advocates for the importance of community theatre, making sure the right people hear the message, loud and clear, that the arts begin at home.



SHARON HOUK

Individual Member

Goshen, Connecticut

When I first attended AACT’s National Directors Conference, I had never been in a room with so many other executive, managing, and artistic directors from community theatre—all who were fortunate to be paid for their work. The information received was invaluable, and being with so many other like-minded people was a total reset and recharge. I look forward to attending every other year—to reconnect with colleagues who became friends on so many different levels.

AACTFest is an incredible opportunity for community theatres to showcase what they do in a festival/competition format. I’ve been lucky enough to be at the helm of several productions that went through the local, regional, and even national festival cycles. The biggest benefits are meeting other artists, sharing in their craft, and understanding that we are not alone—that there is amazing theatre being done across the country.

I have been a member of AACT as an individual and with a few different community theatre organizations for nearly 25 years now, and have just completed 10 years of service as AACT State Representative for Connecticut. And while my life has changed a bit in the last few years and I am no longer working for a community theatre program, I’m still a proud individual member of AACT, and will continue to be so as long as possible.



Introduce your audiences to the First Couple of Jazz Lil & Louis Armstrong

Their love made sparks ... and history!

*“... heartwarming and heartbreaking.”
“... as fresh and lively as anything I’ve seen lately.”*

All-Black cast: 3F, 3M actors/singers

Music recorded by acclaimed jazz musicians on tracks for rehearsals and performances; also available on charts. Songs include “Chicago, That Toddlin’ Town,” “When the Saints Go Marching In,” “Sheik of Araby” and dozens more.

www.lil-and-satchmo.com • jo@jomorello.com



A New Play Licensing Company
Free Downloads at PowPlays.com
Publishers Dan Sheldon & Ronnie Larsen



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

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

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

Take Part in World Theatre Day

March 27, 2024

Since 1962, World Theatre Day has been celebrated on March 27 by theatre organizations and theatre lovers all over the world.

Created by the International Theatre Institute (ITI), the international non-governmental organization for the performing arts, World Theatre Day is designed to underscore the value and importance of theatre as an art form, and its positive impact on individuals and communities.

"What we do in the world of theatre as playwrights, directors, actors, scenographers, poets, musicians, choreographers, and technicians, all of us without exception, is an act of creating life that did not exist before we got on stage. This life deserves a caring hand that holds it, a loving chest that embraces it, a kind heart that sympathizes with it, and a sober mind that provides it with the reasons it needs to continue and survive."

—Samiha Ayoub, Egyptian actress and World Theatre Day message author



National and international theatre events are organized to mark the occasion, but many activities are local. To find

out how you can participate in the celebration of World Theatre Day, visit world-theatre-day.org

Each year, a World Theatre Day International Message is circulated, in which a figure of world stature shares their reflections on the theme of Theatre and a Culture of Peace. The first message was written in 1962 by Jean Cocteau, French playwright, designer, filmmaker, visual artist and critic. You can read it, and messages in the years since, online at the link above.

An international non-governmental organization for the performing arts, ITI was founded in 1948 by UNESCO and the international theatre community.

Regionally Speaking

AACT's membership consists of organizations and individuals from 11 Regions. Each Region has a Regional Representative who serves on the AACT Board of Directors. (For more on AACT Regions, including a map, visit aact.org/regions.)

The Representative's role is an important one. It includes bringing regional concerns and achievements to the Board's attention, providing information about AACT programs and services to members in the Region, and furthering communication and networking among those members.



AACT Region 4B represents Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Its Representative is **Kristy Meanor**, Artistic Director for Alabama's Wetumpka Depot Players. She also serves as the Alabama State Representative for the Southeastern Theatre Conference.

In her role as Region Rep, Meanor is particularly interested in helping theatres in her Region better understand the resources AACT provides.

"I've always leaned into the benefits associated with AACT membership," she explained. "My theatre has taken advantage of discounts on royalties and ASCAP fees. We recently moved our insurance policy to a company that offers discounts for AACT members and who specialize in nonprofit coverage. The resources that AACT offers empower me to be a better leader for our theatre. We are thriving, thanks to those resources and the connections I have made with AACT theatre colleagues across the country."

Meanor says the most important thing she hopes to accomplish in her role is a greater sense of community within her Region.

"I want to hear from colleagues in our Region about ways we can facilitate networking and sharing of resources that could benefit the communities we serve," she said. "As we create theatre in a post-pandemic world, we have the opportunity to lean into to each other for support and to share resources."

Your members will love it!

Assisted Living: THE MUSIC
...for the holidays

Flexible Cast
2 to 18 actors

Flexible band
Tracks to 7 Musicians

STAGE RIGHTS A Member of the Broadway Licensing Family
www.StageRights.com

INSANITY IS IN THE HEIR.

THE VULTURES


A PLAY BY MARK A. RIDGE


LICENSE
NOW

HEUER
PUBLISHING
ESTABLISHED 1928
www.HeuerPub.com

SCAN QR CODE
or Visit Heuerpub.com
to read the free script
preview and see more
info for this title.



 Evolution Theatre (Columbus, OH)

 Jerri Shafer

Advocacy Matters

Michael Cochran, AACT Board of Directors

Advocacy for the arts and making your case for support can be a challenge, but the work is much easier—and more effective—when your theatre is perceived as a valued partner in your community.

Is your theatre a member of your local Chamber of Commerce? If not, you are missing an important opportunity.

Our Chamber is very active and each year, when I'm able, I travel with a group—by bus to our state capital or by plane to Washington D.C.—to make the case on why our community is worthy of support. We've met with our state representatives, governor, congressmen, and senators. We've also had meetings with staff from the National Endowment for the Arts and Americans for the Arts to discuss the arts, opportunities, and funding.

It's important that I'm seen with a delegation of businesspeople from our community in these conversations. Being recognized as an important partner (not just another nonprofit soliciting funds) and having a voice at the table for important discussions is essential.

But advocacy doesn't always involve scheduled meetings. Many of my best conversations have been during taxi or bus rides in between meetings, or at receptions and dinners. That's when I get to spend time with local community leaders, building relationships. It's an easy icebreaker in the conversation to talk about your theatre and what shows you are doing. You also have the chance to invite local leaders to your next show or explain how to get their child involved in classes. Or talk about what we do for the community in terms of education, jobs, and economic impact.

Last year, I sat with 75 people from our Chamber in a meeting with the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Energy, seeking support for initiatives important to our community. Our leaders spoke of the broad community support for those initiatives—and mentioned that arts leaders were present in support of those goals, as well.

One of my most memorable conversations took place while getting a drink at a reception. I found myself talking with then-Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, who was with her husband, Senator Mitch McConnell. Secretary Chao was interested in what our theatre was doing, and how that connected with her interest in literacy and educational programming. The Senator was not particularly interested in community theatre, but he got to hear a lot about it because his wife was.

Clearly, advocacy is about building relationships. I've had opportunities to talk with businesses about sponsorships, with local and state elected officials about grants, with federal elected officials about SVOG (Shuttered Venue Operators Grants) and National Endowment for the Arts funding, as well as funding of state arts councils. These conversations have helped both our theatre and our community.

So, if you want to get into “the room where it happens,” begin in your own community with business leaders and the Chamber of Commerce or main street organizations. They will gladly invite you to help support the broader goals of your community. Once they get to know you, those relationships can lead to support for your theatre and the arts. And that lead to results at the state and national level, as well.

That is advocacy at its best.



Michael Cochran is Executive Director at Market House Theatre (MHT) 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.

The book cover for 'MAKING GOD LAUGH' by Sean Grennan features a large, bold title in blue and white letters. Below the title, the author's name 'BY SEAN GRENNAN' is written in white. At the bottom right of the cover, the website 'makinggodlaugh.com' is displayed. The background is a collage of various vintage family photographs, including children and groups of people.

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

Chicago Sun-Times

Published by Playscripts, Inc.

2024 Season

A little theater with a big heart and an even bigger season!



*NOT INCLUDED IN SEASON TICKETS



*NOT INCLUDED IN SEASON TICKETS

BARN LOT Theater
EDMONTON, KY

For info, tickets and more visit barnlottheater.org

Community Theatre's Future is Bright—and Diverse (Just Ask Kristofer Geddie...)

Dorinda Toner, AACT Board of Directors

When I think on the amazing landscape of brilliant theater-makers across this country that I have met through AACT, Kristofer Geddie is high on my list. Actually, as Executive Director at Florida's Venice Theatre, he's on a lot of people's lists—and is one of the most compassionate and thoughtful humans I know.

Recently I interviewed Kris in a cross-country phone call that quickly evolved into a rewarding discussion about theatre, community, diversity, and the future.

What is DEIB and what does it mean to you?

DEIB stands for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, but the interpretation of those words varies. Kris looked up a number of definitions online but never found the right fit.

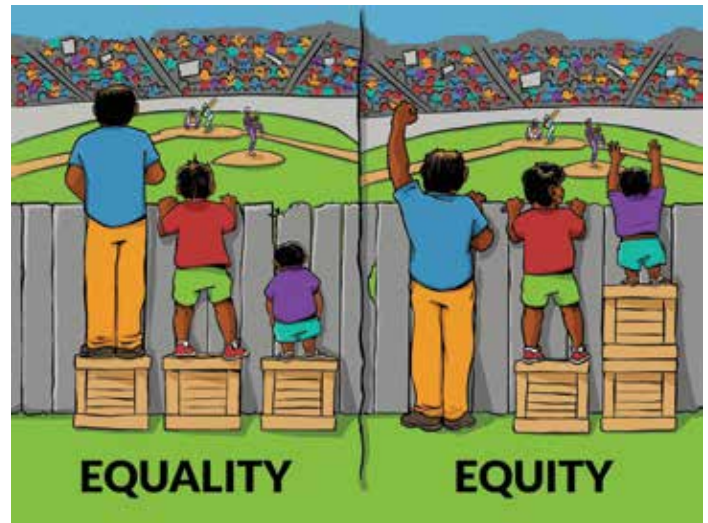
"I believe we have to consider all types of diversity—economic, social, age; all of that," he explained. "We must ask ourselves, who isn't sitting at our tables? And what do our tables look like? Are they too tall, too square? Do we need to rebuild our tables?"

Kris referenced the famous fence illustration (above right) that so eloquently illustrates the meaning of equity. In terms of inclusion, Kris challenges community theatres to do more: "Everyone we serve has to feel like they have a place, and they have to know they are welcome."

Small, thoughtful steps, like ensuring that the tape you use to attach microphones to performers' faces work for all skin tones, can make a huge impact.

What are the benefits of DEIB in our work and creative spaces?

"Diversity is essential to our survival. We will not survive otherwise because our world, our economics—it's all changing. We must see our communities for what and how they are, and represent that."



In particular, he emphasizes creating spaces where teens and young adults feel safe to express themselves, "where they can be who they are, and love one another as they are."

What is the best advice for leaders trying to foster DEIB in predominantly white communities?

"Forget guilt. Put that guilt down, it's not serving anyone," he said—emphatically. "Step into 'foreign' places, listen to others. It's the listening that helps us find the answers and build trust. Look for similarities, not differences."

Kris also encourages leaders to "celebrate the small things, and remember, there is no timeline. Developing DEIB takes time and is ongoing—there is no finish line, either."

Can you expand on how you see DEIB as fundamental to AACT's future growth?

"I see community theatre as the national theatre of this country," Kris said, "and AACT is the leader. We have to be the beacon. We cannot rely on the regional and professional theatres to show us the way—we must be nimble and set standards for community theatre and for what works in our communities."

Kris envisions AACT providing resources, setting standards, and encouraging our national membership to expand its reach to as many people as possible, pointing out that AACT already has a committee that is working on these concerns right now.

Clearly, he sees that the future of community theatre is bright—and diverse. And in many ways, the future is already here.



Dorinda Toner is the Producing Artistic Director of Twilight Theater Company in Portland, Oregon. She has been performing on stages across North America for over 36 years. A member of AACT's Spotlight Editorial Team, she serves on the AACT Board of Directors and is Vice President of PATA (Portland Area Theatre Alliance).

AACT members, enter code GRUMPY on your license application to
RECEIVE 10% OFF!



Grumpy Old Men

THE MUSICAL

TRW Theatricalrights.com | 646-736-3232
@trwshows

'It's hoot. Actually, that is too mild a word.' - Cincinnati Enquirer
"It's a wonderfully silly show with a strong political bite." - Broadway World

**6 men or 6 women or a Combination of
both play 22 characters!**



CHURCH GIRLS

the musical

**One onstage pianist!
No Orchestra Necessary.
(backing tracks available for rental)**

A new campy, cheeky, audacious musical comedy. The ladies of the Umatilla Second Christian Church Women's Auxiliary League are getting together to produce their annual Mother's Day Pageant. Six actors play 22 characters in this singing, acting, dancing, improv tour de force. As the 'Church Girls' prepare for their pageant, chaos and calamity bring out less than 'saintly' behavior. The result is Heaven sent hilarity!

www.churchgirlsmusical.com

License it now for your theatre season!

Online Resources

Each community theatre needs the kind of governing board that will get done what needs to be done at that particular time in that particular setting. But how to get there? Below is a vetted list of online resources to help your board become more effective.

American Association of Community Theatre

aact.org

AACCT offers many resources to its members, including articles, forms, sample documents, and more, in its Resource Library. Some material is also available to any site visitor. On the website's menu, click on "Making Theatre," then "Governance."

BoardSource

boardsource.org

Offers a variety of tools, resources, and research data to

increase board effectiveness and strengthen organizational impact. On the website's menu, click on "Support for Your Board," then "Resources by Topic."

National Council of Nonprofits

councilofnonprofits.org

Provides information and guidance on board roles and responsibilities, board orientation, and good governance policies for nonprofits, as well as fundraising and resource development.

501 Commons

501commons.org

Nonprofit support, free information, and referral services, including boards and governance resources.

Blue Avocado

blueavocado.org

Practical tools and tips for nonprofits, by nonprofits, including the online *Magazine of American Nonprofits*.

Independent Sector

independentsector.org

A national membership organization, its website also offers public access to information on governance, volunteerism, and nonprofit policy issues.

Nonprofit Hub

nonprofithub.org

Articles, publications, and free nonprofit guides.

Nonprofit Resource Hub

nonprofitresourcehub.org

This trade association also serves the nonprofit sector with a variety of resources, including articles on board development and governance.

State and Regional Resources

Many states have associations for nonprofit organizations that include resources on board development. Start with the directory provided by the National Council of Nonprofits. You can also use Google to search for "nonprofit resources [name of state or region]. For example "nonprofit resources Michigan" or "nonprofit resources New England."



New Roles




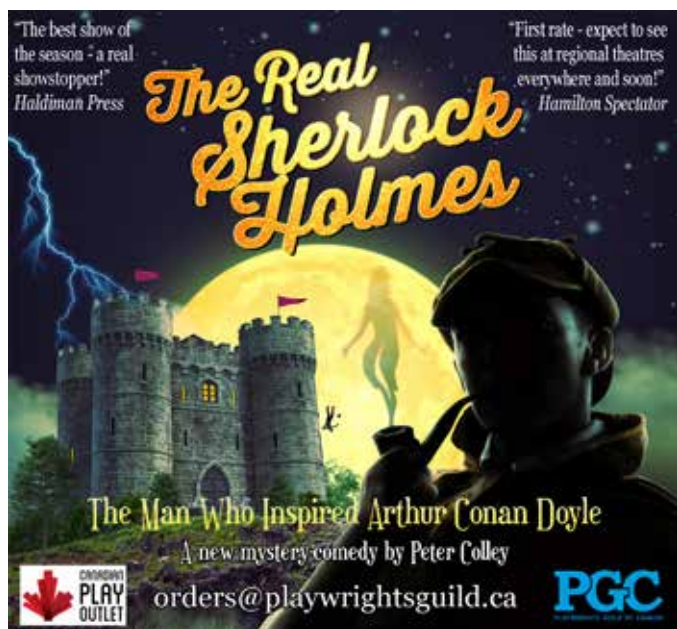
As its new Managing Director, **Bradley Akers** has returned “home” to **Players by the Sea** in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, where he served the theatre in many capacities, including as Artistic Director from 2014–2018.

One of his most notable accomplishments during that time was developing the theatre’s New Voices program, a year-long new play development program that has since seen the world

premieres of eight plays and musicals by Northeast Florida writers.

“I am overjoyed to return to Players by the Sea in this new capacity,” Akers said. “So much of my formative time as an artist and an administrator was spent within these walls, and after a significant time away, I feel honored and prepared to bring my spirit and passion for this work back into this special place.”

Delvina Wynn, President of the Players by the Sea’s Board of Directors, said that Bradley’s previous connection with the theatre, his career in nonprofit and performing arts administration, and his “unwavering passion for the connective power of the arts mark an exciting new chapter for our organization. We are confident that under his visionary leadership, Players by the Sea will continue to flourish, offering a home for artists and unlocking the potential of the arts in our daily lives.”



SUMMERWIND Productions

My Way—
A Tribute to the
Music of Frank
Sinatra

OTHER MUSICALS:

- Christmas My Way – A Sinatra Holiday Bash
- 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 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.

Diamond Partner



Platinum Partners



Gold Partners



Silver Partner



Bronze Partners

BookTix
Heuer Publishing
Lectrosonics
Pioneer Drama Service
Theatrical Rights Worldwide
Tickets to the City

Program Partners

ASCAP
Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation
BMI
Church Mutual Insurance
Dramatic Publishing

Support Theatre in America

Become an AACT Corporate Partner! For information, visit aact.org/partner.

AACT Contributors

September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023

Thank You! With those two words, we convey our heartfelt appreciation of the generosity of our donors. Their gifts help AACT continue offering a wide range of expertise, assistance, networking, and support, so that theatres can provide the best possible experience for participants and audiences alike. We thank each of them for helping to ensure the future of community theatre in America.

AACT is able to continue its mission with the support & generosity of people like our contributors and you. If you have not made your annual donation yet, please support us at aact.org/donations

AACT NewPlayFest

Jack K. Ayre & Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation

AACT YouthFest

Jack K. Ayre & Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation

AACT Endowment Fund

Producer \$1000 and above

Gary Walker
Jon Douglas Rake & Jeffrey A. Stvrtecky
Louis & Janet Ursone
Mary & John Doveton
Robert Wheland
Stephen & Mary Krempasky
Linda Miller
Deborah Shaw Hertzog

Friend \$50 - \$99

Larry Pint

AACT Program and Services

Producer \$1000 and above

Dr. Susanne Caviness
Julie Crawford

Director \$500 - \$999

Todd Kenter
Gary Walker

Star \$250 - \$499

Michael Cochran

Supporting Role \$150 - \$249

Blair Hayes
Francis Carlson
Heather Hollingsworth
Nicholas Credgington
Owen Allen
Scott Bloom

Cameo \$100 - \$149

Cynthia Martell
Curtain Call, Inc.
Deborah Shaw Hertzog
Harv Thompson
John Lyttle
Kristi Quinn
Larry Pint
Madeline McGrail
Mary Jo DeNolf
Robert Spencer
Rose Matheny
Waxahachie Community Theatre

Friend \$50 - \$99

Alethea Hatwell
Arlington Friends of The Drama
Deb Bruner
Deborah M. Johnson
Dramatic Publishing Company
Fargo-Moorhead Community Theatre
Flint Community Players
James Hoffmeyer
Jennifer Crique
Kimberly Prowse
Kathleen Stephens
Kay Armstrong
Lawton Community Theatre
Linda Ward
Lisa Wade
Newnan Theatre Company
Pat Pavegio
Penelope Hall
Sally Barnes
Scot MacDonald
Stephen & Mary Krempasky
Shirley Cockrell
Ted Haun

In Memory of Mr. James Carver

Lisa Wade

In Memory of Mrs. Nancy Carver

Kimberly Prowse

In Memory of Mr. James and Mrs. Nancy Carver

Blair Hayes
Kathleen Stephens
Cynthia Martell

In Memory of Bill Muchow

Larry Pint

In Memory of Dennis Gilmore

Harv Thompson

In Memory of Mrs. Ruth Legg

Susanne Caviness

In Memory of Mr. Bobby Golibart

Scott Bloom

In Memory of Darlene DeLorenzo

Jennifer Crique

In Honor of Beverley Lord

Kay Armstrong

In Honor of Lonnie & Nancy Hollingsworth

Heather Hollingsworth

Thanks to all our contributors!

Due to space, only contributions over \$50 are listed. Visit the website for a complete list:

aact.org/donations

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

Calendar of Events

Dates	Event	St	City	Phone	Web Site
February 2-11	AACT NewPlayFest Premiere: <i>Criminal Mischief</i> by William Cameron	MI	Jonesville	817-732-3177	thesauk.org
February 8-17	AACT NewPlayFest Premiere: <i>The Red Flags</i> , by Catherine Castellani	WI	Verona	817-732-3177	vact.org
February 23-24	AACT Winter Board Meetings 2024	CA	San Diego	817-732-3177	aact.org/winter
	AACT Jan/Feb Webinars	online		817-732-3177	aact.org/webinars

Advertisers

<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	8
<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	16
<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	19
<i>Assisted Living: The Musical</i>	24
Barn Lot Theater	27
Roger Bean <i>Jukebox Musicals of Roger Bean</i>	11
<i>Bingo (The Winning Musical)</i>	21
Buddy Worldwide <i>The Buddy Holly Story</i>	17
Peter Colley <i>The Real Sherlock Holmes</i> ..	31
Concord Theatricals <i>Anastasia</i>	5
Disney Theatrical Group <i>Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge</i> ...	9
Dramatic Publishing <i>Miss Holmes</i>	6
Sean Grennan <i>A Rock Sails By</i>	3
Sean Grennan <i>Making God Laugh</i>	26
Heuer Publishing <i>Sleeping Beauty Rise and Shine</i>	2

Heuer Publishing <i>The Vultures</i>	25
Thomas Hischak <i>Thomas Hischak Plays</i>	10
Historical Emporium	14
Luigi Jannuzzi <i>All the King's Women</i>	18
Miracle or 2 Theatrical Licensing	20
Jo Morello <i>Lil and Satchmo</i>	22
MTI <i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i>	35
Pioneer Drama Service <i>Rainbow Fish</i>	30
Plays for New Audiences	18
Plays of Wilton	23
Summerwind Productions	31
Table for Five Productions <i>Church Girls: The Musical</i>	29
Thirty Saints Productions	15
TRW <i>Half Time, Grumpy Old Men</i>	13
TRW <i>The Wind and the Willows</i>	14
TRW <i>Grumpy Old Men</i>	28
Tobins Lake Studios	34






Services Provided

- Hand Painted Backdrop Rentals
- Curtain Rentals
- LED Star Curtain Rentals
- Custom Backdrops
- Custom Stage Curtains
- Easy Armor
- Easy Ornaments

5801 M-30
Beaverton, MI
(888) 719-0300
studio@tobinslake.com



MUSIC THEATRE
INTERNATIONAL

**YOUR GOLDEN
TICKET IS HERE!**



Read the Script for FREE



@mtishows

