

CALLBOARD

Thunderous applause for successful Michigan AACTfest in Owosso

Who else had a blast at AACTFest? We sure did! From meeting new theatre friends to watching outstanding performances to exploring historic downtown Owosso, the weekend was packed with fun from start to finish.

First and foremost, congratulations to our two finalists: **Players de Noc** (performing *The Cutthroat Game*) and **Grand Rapids Civic Theatre** (performing *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*)! These two teams will move on to the Regional AACTFest competition in Kokomo, Indiana April 11-14. **Kalamazoo Civic Theatre** (performing *Red*) was chosen as the alternate. In addition to these 2019 State winners, audiences enjoyed excellent performances from

- ☆ **The Sauk, Jonesville** (*Flower Girls—Act 1*)
- ☆ **Rosedale Community Players** (*Turbulence*)
- ☆ **Monroe Community Players** (*The Tempest*)
- ☆ **Bay City Players** (*35mm: A Musical Exhibition*).

Speaking of excellence, let's hear it for our adjudicators! What a privilege it was to have Ron Cameron-Lewis, Larry Nielsen, and Kathy Pingel on board for this year's state level competition. After each performance, they took the stage to address their comments to the performing team. As these panels were public, everyone in the audience was able to listen in, which came to be a favorite part of the process for many theatre-goers. The adjudi-



The people who made the AACTfest happen: L to R, AACT Commissioner Chris Serface, Adjudicators Ron Cameron-Lewis and Kathy Pingel, Owosso Community Players Festival Co-chairs Ruthann Liagre and Jessica Hickey, Adjudicator Larry Nielsen, and CTAM president Betsy Willis.

cators' feedback was helpful for spectators as well as the competing teams as they illuminated the essential elements and structure of a good performance.

As the festival hosts, **Owosso Community Players** would like to thank Chris Serface, Secretary of the Washington State Community Theatre Association and American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) board member, who served as our Festival Commissioner; the Owosso planning committee and many volunteers who made the weekend run so smoothly; and most importantly, the seven theatre teams who brought their heart and soul to the stage to make AACTFest happen. The whole event was a true representation of what community theatre is all about.

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Callboard

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This is the official newsletter of the Community Theatre Association of Michigan, issued monthly to all group affiliates and individual members with e-mail addresses on record. Distribution is by e-mail with a link to the newsletter on the association website. Back issues are available on the association website. Correspondence to the **Callboard** should be sent to the Editor at mellbee@earthlink.net.

- Productions and dates should be sent to the Editor.
- Short informational articles are accepted and will be used on a space-available basis.
- Show photos should be carefully selected and sent to the Editor, along with identifying caption and permission from photographer for us to publish.

Updated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Executive Secretary Nancy Peska and should be sent to her at peska@cmsinter.net.

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CTAM
Community Theatre
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2019 Playwriting Contest

Tick-Tock . . . Tick-Tock . . . Don't be late!

We're watching the clock, waiting to receive your masterpiece. Deadline for original Michigan plays is **May 15**. Send your manuscript in proper format to ctamplaywriting@gmail.com. Snail-mail your entry fee (\$20) and a letter of acknowledgement from a CTAM troupe. Full details on the webpage.

By the way, we've been seeing previous contest winners on stage – Aged to Perfection (Old Town Playhouse's readers theatre group) just did Linda LaRocque's *Town Car for Sale* (2018 winner) and Northern Lites Readers Theatre (Cadillac) did *Romance Guaranteed* by Art Nemitz (2016 winner). *Romance Guaranteed* was also done on the OTP main stage and was a 2017 AACTfest entry. Continued successes for those winning playwrights.



CTAM Calendar of Events

April 7-13, 2019 Everywhere!	National Volunteer Week
April 11-14, 2019 Kokomo, IN	AACTfest Region III Festival
May 4, 2019 Clio	CTAM Board meeting Clio Cast & Crew
June 16-22, 2019 Gettysburg, PA	AACTfest nationals at the Majestic Theater
July 20-21, 2019 Lansing	Master Class Weekend
July 21, 2019 Lansing	CTAM Board meeting



The prez Sez... by Betsy Willis

Thank you to each and every person who made the Michigan AACTFest 2019 a rousing success! If I were adjudicating the weekend, I would give it an Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble award.

This year seven organizations performed all types of theatre from musical to comedy, classic to brand new. Yes, there were three original works performed in this AACTFest, one of which advanced to regionals. The Owosso Community Players were outstanding hosts from the front of house to the backstage. Our AACT commissioner was helpful and friendly, and our adjudicators were first rate, or at least I heard they were...

That's right. I never saw a single performance or adjudication! A few weeks ago I was asked by Steve Hughes, the Region III representative from Indiana where the regional AACTFest is being held, if I would serve as one of the three adjudicators for regionals. I was thrilled to be asked. What I didn't think about at the time is that would mean I couldn't see the shows at the state level as my adjudication needs to be based on seeing the show for the first time and without the bias of having heard it evaluated previously. As President of CTAM I thought I should still be present at the state festival, so while everyone else was seeing shows I was working on CTAM business in the hotel. I did, however, have the pleasure of welcoming everyone before the sessions, and socializing with many of my favorite theatre people from around the state and the nation.

When I stepped on the stage to welcome everyone for the first time I observed that I was looking at an audience comprised of people I know from theatre companies from across the stage. Some had groups participating, others were there to support friends they had met at other

CTAM events, and many were in the audience because they just wanted to watch and learn. I told everyone how exciting it was to see so much of the community theatre community in one place doing what we all love to do! At lunch there was more conversation about my observation, and someone said we were a "community of theatres." I loved the phrase, and it stuck. CTAM is now, in my mind at least, a *community of theatres* who present theatre to their communities.

Now it is on to regionals in Kokomo, IN April 11-14. It would be wonderful to once again look out on the audience and see our Michigan community of theatres there to cheer on Escanaba's Players de Noc and Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, as well as our peers from eight other groups from our region. I hope to see you there! And this time I get to watch the shows. I can't wait!!

July 20 and 21, 2019

Summer Master Classes announced

The format of the traditional Summer Master Classes is being changed this year a bit to try and make it more affordable and easier for people to attend. The session will be only two days (Saturday, July 20, and Sunday, July 21) with exact timing yet to be announced.

A Master Class for actors and directors will be led by the talented Susan Craves of the Purple Rose Theatre Company in Chelsea ... and the Master Class all about properties will be led by the amazing Michael Wilson, prop master at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre.

Our host for the two-day class will be The Downeaster Theatre, 1120 North Pennsylvania Avenue, Lansing 48906. Housing suggestions will be forthcoming, but please save the dates on your summer calendar.

Full details and registration information will be in the May issue of the Callboard.

Theatrical Awards announced for the Michigan AACTfest in Owosso

The seven groups competing were awarded a variety of honors at the end of the Festival, in addition to the three top performance prizes listed in the lead article on Page 1:

- ☆ Outstanding Ensemble: *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* and *Red*
- ☆ Excellence in Choreography: Kellie Lajiness, *The Tempest*
- ☆ Best Performer in a Supporting Role: Emily Diener, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* and Dave Durham, *Turbulence*
- ☆ Best Performer in a Leading Role: Ryan Owen, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* and Jamie Peterson, *The Cutthroat Game*
- ☆ Excellence in Costume Design: Emily Stein, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*
- ☆ Excellence in Sound: MJ Dulmage, *The Flower Girls*
- ☆ Excellence in Set Design: Jamie Peterson, *The Cutthroat Game*
- ☆ Excellence in Lighting Design: J.R. Spaulding, Jr., *The Cutthroat Game*
- ☆ Excellence in Props & Set Dressing: Stacy Bartell, *Red*
- ☆ Featured Performer: Leigh Levine, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*
- ☆ Featured Performer: Martina Petit, Elisabeth Brockman, Dillon Sickels
- ☆ Rising Star: Denis Koepke, *35mm: A Musical Exhibition*
- ☆ Outstanding Director: Bill Anderson, Jr., *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*
- ☆ Choreographic Mayhem: Alyssa Powers & Kathleen McBee, *The Tempest*
- ☆ Unexpected Physical Comedy: Trinity Bird, *The Flower Girls*



Jamie Petersen from *Players de Noc* in *Escanaba* (with the cap) and Bill Anderson from *Grand Rapids Civic* are both taking their shows to *Regional competition in Kokomo, Indiana!*



Faces in the AACTfest crowd





What's happening around the state!

Stagecrafters, Royal Oak	<i>Boeing Boeing</i>	Mar 22-Apr 7, 2019
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Shrek The Musical</i>	Mar 24-Apr 6, 2019
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City	<i>Marjorie Prime</i>	Mar 29-Apr 13, 2019
Twin City Players, St. Joseph	<i>Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time</i>	Mar 29-Apr 4, 2019
STAGE-M Big Rapids	<i>An Agatha Christie Mystery</i>	April 4-7, 2019
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Psycho Beach Party</i>	April 5-14, 2019
Tawas Bay Players	<i>The Odd Couple, Female version</i>	Apr 5-14, 2019
Pinckney Players	<i>Alice in Wonderland*</i>	Apr 6-14, 2019
Master Arts Theatre, Grand Rapids	<i>Calvin Miller's The Singer</i>	Apr 11-May 4, 2019
Cadillac Footliters	<i>Shrek, Jr.*</i>	Apr 12-20, 2019
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Disney's Cinderella Kids*</i>	Apr 13-14, 2019
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Harvey (Senior Theatre)</i>	Apr 19-28, 2019
Downeaster Theatre, Lansing	<i>The Swan Princess*</i>	Apr 25-May 5, 2019
The Sauk, Jonesville	<i>Sauk Shorts**</i>	Apr 25-28, 2019
Clio Cast and Crew	<i>Calendar Girls</i>	Apr 26-May 5, 2019
Farmington Players	<i>The Drowsy Chaperone</i>	Apr 26-May 18, 2019
Grand Rapids Civic	<i>James and the Giant Peach</i>	April 26-May 5, 2019
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind**</i>	Apr 26-May 5, 2019
Holland Civic Theatre	<i>Sunshine Boys</i>	Apr 26-May 17, 2019
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City	<i>The Who's Tommy</i>	Apr 26-May 18, 2019
Players de Noc, Escanaba	<i>Moon over Buffalo</i>	Apr 26-May 4, 2019
Port Austin Community Players	<i>God's Favorite</i>	Apr 26-May 5, 2019
Rosedale Community Players	<i>Panache</i>	Apr 26-May 11, 2019
Stagecrafters, Royal Oak	<i>Southern Comfort</i>	Apr 26-May 12, 2019
Bay City Players	<i>Man of LaMancha</i>	May 2-12, 2019
Muskegon Civic Theatre	<i>Shrek, The Musical</i>	May 2-5, 2019
Clarkston Village Players	<i>Out of Order</i>	May 3-18, 2019
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>War Paint</i>	May 3-19, 2019
Players Guild of Dearborn	<i>It Shoulda Been You</i>	May 3-26, 2019
Southgate Community Players	<i>Barnum</i>	May 3-11, 2019
Village Players, Birmingham	<i>Guys and Dolls</i>	May 3-19, 2019
Alpena Civic Theatre	<i>How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying</i>	May 9-19, 2019
Flint Community Players	<i>LaCage aux Folles</i>	May 9-19, 2019
Pit & Balcony, Saginaw	<i>It Shoulda Been You</i>	May 10-19, 2019
Hartland Players	<i>The Addams Family</i>	May 11-19, 2019
Avon Players, Rochester	<i>Company</i>	May 17-June 1, 2019
Community Theatre of Howell	<i>13, The Musical</i>	May 17-19, 2019
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Pippi Longstocking *</i>	May 17-25, 2019
Stagecrafters, Royal Oak	<i>Oklahoma!</i>	May 17-June 9, 2019
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>10-Minute Festival: Winning and Losing</i>	May 18, 2019
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City	<i>Mothers & Sons</i>	May 24-June 8, 2019
Downeaster Theatre, Lansing	<i>Charlotte's Web*</i>	May 30-June 9, 2019

* indicates youth productions; ** indicates second stage productions, if submitted.

Please be sure to fill out your Dues Renewal Form completely, as that is the source for this information on shows! If your information is incorrect or missing, please send the correct information to The Editor to be corrected or included in the next issue.



The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Merry Christmas! (and it's not too early to think about it!) Many community groups do a holiday show every year. Ask Ben Zylman. Take his PR workshop, if you haven't already, and he'll tell you that it's a cash cow or like printing money! Here's a new show, written by Michigan's own Leeds Bird and Kevin Cole from Bay City Players.

A Carol of the Birds was written to provide a musical that could be performed by community theatre, churches, and civic groups without great expense or complicated staging. Inspired by the 1888 *The Birds' Christmas Carol* by Kate Douglas Wiggin (author of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*), the co-creators strove to create a musical play that would project the spirit of Christmas in simple and direct terms. The setting is a middle-size town in a Great Lakes State during the Great Depression in 1935.

Cast includes four adult women playing 35-65 years, two adult men, 35-55, six boys (four older teens, two younger), four girls (two older teens, two younger), plus carolers.

The stage floor is used for the interior of the Bird's home. As this space is also used for outdoor scenes, the only additional area needed is an upstairs bedroom. Set dressing needs to reflect depression era 1930s, including a movable Christmas tree. Minimal set pieces create the scenes. Costumes, hair, and props also must be of the period, including a 1920-30s wheelchair.

Plot: Carol Bird is born to a "well-to-do" family on Christmas Day. As she grows, she brings light and

joy to all around her, even as her "light" grows dimmer, due to a handicap. The Bird family and their neighbors' lives are depicted over a span of time, letting the audience feel her impact on everyone. When Carol asks her family to help her bring a true Christmas to the poor Ruggles family, the

audience will be moved. Several generations are portrayed throughout the play, changing and growing as families do, then and now in 2019.

The music is a mixture of traditional Christmas songs and carols, for example: "Joy to the World," "Away in the Manger," "O Christmas Tree," "Jolly Old St. Nicholas," "Up on the House-

top," all public domain. Six songs written by Cole and Bird are interspersed throughout the play, enriching the story telling.

This is from Leeds and is critical for the success of the show! "This play is not sad and the director may not let it become sad. People are happy and smile; people are serious

but grateful; people appreciate what Carol accomplished in her brief life and openly enjoy the results. Now, this does not mean audience members may not weep or feel sad. But the production is to do whatever it can to taste-

fully counter that. Here's an example of avoiding the maudlin and going for the loving. During the song, "The People You Love," which is sung the Christmas after Gramma has passed, Gramma's adult sons enjoy warm memories of sharing the song with their mother when their father passed. The message

is we are grateful for what we've shared, not unhappy that we can't have more."

Photos above are from the Bay City Players' production last season. For more information, contact Leeds Bird at lnmbird@chartermi.net.

