



CALLBOARD

December 2019

CTAM receives operational grants from MCACA and NEA

The CTAM Board is pleased to announce that we received an Operational Support Grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The total award is \$5,810, and we believe it is the first ever grant for CTAM.

According to John Bracey, MCACA Executive Director, "MCACA is an organization of people who work to make things happen. We want to make sure there is access for citizens all across the state. We want children to learn to express themselves. We want to teach empathy as people walk in someone else's shoes. We want people to connect with those who live around them."

In January the CTAM Board will be determining how to best use these funds. Options include paying for conference keynote instructors and nationally known presenters, lowering the cost of event registration, increasing marketing dollars, and a variety of other ideas.

Your thoughts are welcome as we work to decide how to best benefit the membership of CTAM. Please contact President Betsy Willis at ryonwillis915@hotmail.com. If you have the opportunity to speak to any of our state legislators or the Governor, please take a moment to say thank you on behalf of CTAM.



Christmastime is here. Happiness and cheer. And for Peanuts fans everywhere, it just wouldn't be Christmas without this classic 1965 holiday film. Christmas lights may be twinkling red and green, but Charlie Brown has the Yuletide blues. To get in the holiday spirit, he takes Lucy's advice and directs the Christmas play. And what's a Christmas play without a Christmas tree? But everyone makes fun of the short, spindly evergreen Charlie Brown brings - until the real meaning of Christmas works its magic once again.

-- Promo for the C. B. 1965 movie.

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Callboard

Editor.....Mary Lou Britton

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 Administrator and should be sent to ctamthrives@gmail.com

THINGS OVERHEARD...

“CALVIN:

This whole Santa Claus thing just doesn't make sense. Why all the secrecy? Why all the mystery? If the guy exists, why doesn't he ever show himself and prove it? And if he doesn't exist, what's the meaning of all this?

HOBBS:

I dunno. Isn't this a religious holiday?

CALVIN:

Yeah, but actually, I've got the same questions about God.”

— **Bill Watterson**

“In the old days, it was not called the Holiday Season; the Christians called it 'Christmas' and went to church; the Jews called it 'Hanukkah' and went to synagogue; the atheists went to parties and drank. People passing each other on the street would say 'Merry Christmas!' or 'Happy Hanukkah!' or (to the atheists) 'Look out for the wall!’”

— **Dave Barry**

“The Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot have a nativity scene in Washington, D.C. This wasn't for any religious reasons. They couldn't find three wise men and a virgin.”

— **Jay Leno**

“A lovely thing about Christmas is that it's compulsory, like a thunderstorm, and we all go through it together.”

— **Garrison Keillor, Leaving Home**

“Tizzy squawked, and he bounced like a ball on the floor.

“I completely forgot; Santa said something more.

He said that a book gives your very thoughts wings,

That carry you off to see wonderful things,

That lift you aloft, throughout time, throughout space

To every era and every place!”

— **Dorothea Jensen, Tizzy, the Christmas Shelf Elf**

CTAM Calendar of Events

January 18-19, 2020 Kalamazoo	CTAM on the Road Hosted by Kalamazoo Civic
March 22, 2020 Saginaw	CTAM On The Road Hosted by Pit & Balcony
May TBD, 2020 Escanaba	CTAM On The Road Players de Noc
July 18-19, 2020	Board Strategic Planning Retreat, location TBD
October 9-11, 2020	Fall Conference and Annual Meeting. Location TBD

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Just in time for our CTAM trip!

Drama Book Shop to re-open in NYC next spring

The Drama Book Shop will reopen its doors in March 2020 at its new Times Square home at 266 West 39th Street (between 7th and 8th Avenues). The legendary shop's new home will be only one block away from its previous location.

The independent bookstore was forced from its longtime midtown Manhattan home in January. Lin-Manuel Miranda, director Thomas Kail, producer Jeffrey Seller, and theater impresario Detroit James L. Nederlander, with guidance from The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment Commissioner Julie Menin, took it over, found a new home and will continue to operate it.

In business for nearly 100 years, this unique shop in the heart of the Theater District specializes in all things printed for the theater or arts lover—from librettos, plays, and screenplays, to works on theater craft, dramatic techniques, music and biographies of film and theater's greats.

The design of The Drama Book Shop is overseen by creative director David Korins. The atmosphere of the shop is inspired by European cafés of the last century and their role in the exchange and celebration of ideas. More information on a specific opening date for the shop will be announced soon.



Here's help in making your Christmas List

Are people already asking you what you want for Christmas? It's easy! Tell them you want cash toward the CTAM New York Trip, September 16 -20, 2020.

This is a 5-day, 4-night trip to the Big Apple and includes deluxe hotel accommodations right in the heart of the theatre district and airfare from Grand Rapids. There is a guided city tour with refreshments, hosted by our private guide who is a professional New York tour guide; tickets to two Broadway shows, and a backstage tour of the Metropolitan Opera. The price is \$1,995 for a shared room based on a minimum of 14 travelers. If you wish a single room, the cost is \$2,595. A \$500 deposit is needed upon booking and the final payment is due before June 16.

The beauty of this trip is that you have plenty of free time to see other shows of your choosing, enjoy the shopping, explore the city, and track down world-renown, amazing restaurants.

There is an online registration link on our website or contact them directly at executivet-ravel.com/CTAM20. Contact Nancy Peska (peska@cmsinter.net) for more information or if you have questions.

Everyone who went on the 2018 trip had a fabulous time and can't wait to do it again!

My Adventure at the Purple Rose Theatre

By Tara Western

I finally saw a show at Jeff Daniels' Purple Rose Theatre—Bucket List? Check! Bonus: the play was by playwright David MacGregor, whom I met at the CTAM Fall Conference at Treetops Resort several weeks ago. David led two sessions of a playwriting workshop and was also the keynote speaker. I was enthralled by his description of his plays, so I immediately booked tickets for *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Soufflé* (which runs through December 21).

David graciously emailed me the script for his first Sherlock Holmes play, *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Elusive Ear*, and also *Fallen Soufflé*. I loved them both. Admittedly, I'm a Sherlock Holmes fan in all its iterations, but David's format of adding two historical characters to the formidable group of Holmes, Dr. Watson, Irene Adler (Sherlock's lover), and the late Professor Moriarty's daughter, the brilliant and evil Marie Chartier, makes for a hilarious and rich experience.

The performance at the Purple Rose was stupendous! The set, the décor, the costumes, the props, the lighting, the sound, and of course, the acting---Magic! Long story short, I was smitten, and want to share the wealth, so to speak.

Holmes, Watson, Irene Adler, and Marie Chartier appear in both plays. In *Elusive Ear*, the notorious and as-yet-undiscovered genius Vincent van Gogh arrives at Baker Street, bleeding and asking for help with a most unusual case. And then Oscar Wilde shows up! *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Soufflé* has Queen Victoria's son, Bertie (the womanizing Prince of Wales), and celebrity chef Auguste Escoffier seeking help from anarchist assassins, blackmail, and scandal. And by the way, these are both stand-alone plays, not a series.

David is generously sharing his first two Sherlock scripts (the third and final play, *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Ghost Machine*, will debut at the Purple Rose in the Fall of 2021). He will send you the .pdf of the scripts if you email him at dmacgregor77@gmail.com.

For the moment, both of these plays can be licensed directly from David. To give you a little more information about him, he has had his work performed from New York to Tasmania, and his published plays can be found at Playscripts and Heuer Publishing. If you want to see more of his work, go to <http://david-macgregor.com> or his page at the New Play Exchange: <https://newplayexchange.org/users/1668/david-macgregor>. In addition, you might want to visit www.purplerosetheatre.org. Phone: 734-433-7673. For true Holmes' fans, go to the Amateur Mendicant Society of Detroit, "sharing Sherlockian lore and whimsy since 1946" at www.amateurmendicantsociety.org.



Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Elusive Ear. Note the bandaged ear on the character of Vincent Van Gogh!



Currently playing, *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Soufflé*.

It seems to me...

By Dexter Brigham



Theatre is Non-Binary!

When I was invited to write a monthly column for this newsletter, I was asked how frequently I might be interested in contributing. I immediately rushed to my desk and sketched out over a dozen topics that I thought might be interesting to all of you. In the coming months we will explore the state of theatre criticism, how community theatre can support the development of new work, the role of schools in teaching Shakespeare, and other dusty corners of this wonderful art form that we call home.

But at the top of my list is a subject that I find myself returning to time and again: our relentless need to categorize the broad and wondrous spectrum that is the performing arts into a binary system. When I was as young actor living in New York City it was “Equity vs. non-equity;” when I began producing community theatre I had many conversations about “Professional vs. Amateur;” and the thread running through the whole thing has been the longstanding debate over what qualifies as serious “Art” rather than the more frivolous “Entertainment?”

Why do we do this? Why does our psyche push us to pigeonhole ourselves and our creative output? It certainly doesn't reflect reality.

One of the great joys of my life has been discovering just how universal the theatrical experience really is. The habits that are learned in high school drama programs (don't touch another person's props, the proper response to a stage manager's call) are reinforced in community theatre programs, and are practiced daily at the highest levels of the art form. If a community theatre actor sat in the wings of a Broadway show, they would find the language and bustle reassuringly familiar. The same is true of the rehearsal studio. I think there is a pervasive

image of the Broadway world as being this cut-throat, impersonal place where actors are abused. While that does occasionally happen, as it does in any workplace, it is not the norm. Truly inspiring theatre, such as we all seek to create, cannot be made in a toxic atmosphere. Directors, ALL directors, want their actors to feel safe and supported so they can do their best work, whether it's at the Guthrie or here in Midland. Creating a positive work environment shows respect for your artists and the art form.

When I moved from running a small regional theatre to being a part of a large, multi-disciplinary arts center, the breadth of artistic product with which I came into contact exploded. In a single week at the Center, we might present a musical revue, a Rodgers and Hammerstein classic, a stand-up comedian, a magician, a tribute band, and a circus all within a few days. I have to admit that when I arrived here, I held these long-standing opinions about what qualified as true Art, meaning an act of imaginative self-expression that was capable of changing the world. But the night I watched my five-year-old be deeply moved by a performance of our children's theatre program, I realized that my perspective wasn't the only one that mattered. When I talked to a guy who had developed his own one-man retelling of the Star Wars Trilogy, I saw the passion and heart that he had poured into the piece. It wasn't fluff to him. It was the product of love and struggle, the way all Art is.

Theatre is non-binary, friends. Like the people who create it, theatre is a complex mess of the simple and profound, where meaning can be unearthed in surprising places. So the next time you find yourself wanting to neatly define a play or a performer, I urge you to take a breath and allow yourself to embrace the rainbow.

Dexter Brigham is Director of Theatre Programs for the Midland Center for the Performing Arts. In addition to producing the community theatre season, he programs the Center's monthly comedy series, film series and summer Matrix Festival. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Michigan Presenters Network.

Holiday magic on stage...

Muskegon Civic Theatre	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Nov 15-Dec 1, 2019
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City	<i>Elf, The Musical</i>	Nov 15-Dec 14, 2019
Master Arts Theatre	<i>Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley</i>	Nov 21-Dec 14, 2019
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Elf, The Musical</i>	Nov 22-Dec 8, 2019
Avon Players, Rochester	<i>Forever Christmas</i>	Nov 29-Dec 14, 2019
Pit and Balcony Theatre, Saginaw	<i>The Giver</i>	Nov 29-Dec 8, 2019
Players deNoc, Escanaba	<i>Fruitcakes</i>	Nov 29-Dec 7, 2019
Riverwalk Theatre, Lansing	<i>You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown</i>	Nov 29-Dec 8, 2019
Alpena Civic Theatre	<i>The Best/Worst Christmas Pageant Ever*</i>	Dec 5-15, 2019
Manistee Civic Players	<i>Elf, The Musical</i>	Dec 5-7, 2019
The Sauk, Jonesville	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Dec 5-15, 2019
Bay City Players	<i>The Snow Queen</i>	Dec 6-15, 2019
Farmington Players	<i>Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley</i>	Dec 6-21, 2019
Hartland Players	<i>The Best Christmas Pageant*</i>	Dec 6-8, 2019
Twin City Players, Benton Harbor/St. Joe	<i>Kris Kringle, the Musical</i>	Dec 6-15, 2019
Clarkston Village Players	<i>Red vs. the Wolf*</i>	Dec 7-8, 2019
Cadillac Footliters	<i>Home for the Holidays</i>	Dec 12-14, 2019
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Elf The Musical Jr. *</i>	Dec 13-15, 2019
Owosso Community Players	<i>Holiday at Lebowsky</i>	Dec 13-15, 2019
Clio Cast and Crew	<i>The Day Before Christmas</i>	Dec 11-15, 2019
Players deNoc, Escanaba	<i>Miracle on 34th Street</i>	Dec 19, 2019
Twin City Players, Benton Harbor/St. Joe	<i>Grinch **</i>	Dec 19-22, 2019
Riverwalk Theatre, Lansing	<i>Holiday Cheer, a Musical Revue</i>	Dec 20-22, 2019
Clarkston Village Players	<i>Vino Veritas</i>	Jan 10-25, 2020
Center Stage Theatre - Midland	<i>Picasso at the Lapin Agile</i>	Jan 10-25, 2020
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Guys & Dolls</i>	Jan 10-19, 2020
Master Arts Theatre	<i>The Struggles*</i>	Jan 10-20, 2020
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Tick, Tick...Boom!</i>	Jan 10-26, 2020
Alpena Civic Theatre	<i>Wait Until Dark</i>	Jan 16-26, 2020
Riverwalk Theatre, Lansing	<i>Boy Gets Girl</i>	Jan 16-26, 2020
Flint Community Players	<i>Chicago</i>	Jan 16-26, 2020
Avon Players, Rochester	<i>Death Trap</i>	Jan 17-Feb 1, 2020
Cadillac Footliters	<i>Boeing Boeing</i>	Jan 17-25, 2020
Muskegon Civic Theatre	<i>Fun Home</i>	Jan 17-25, 2020
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City	<i>Indecent</i>	Jan 17-Feb 1, 2020
Fenton Village Players	<i>Exit Laughing**</i>	Jan 24-26, 2020
Pit and Balcony Theatre, Saginaw	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	Jan 24-Feb 2, 2020
Tawas Bay Players	<i>Wait Until Dark</i>	Jan 24-Feb 2, 2020

* 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

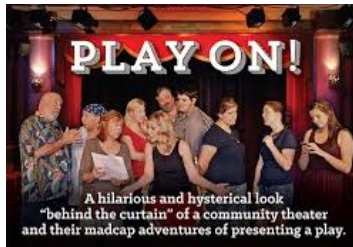
By Tara Western



Happy Holidays! My autumn was filled with theatre. Between October 6 and November 10, I saw a CTAM member production every Sunday, except for October 13, when I was returning from the CTAM conference. There, I was inspired by the Playwriting workshop and keynote address by David MacGregor. I have read two of his scripts and seen one show at the Purple Rose Theatre in Chelsea. See my article on Page 4 for more details!

Need a play with lots of rich characters for both men and women? Both of the scripts this month fit that bill. Both feature the typical drawing room murder mystery. The first features a disastrous production of a mystery; the second a cleverly skewed who-dunnit.

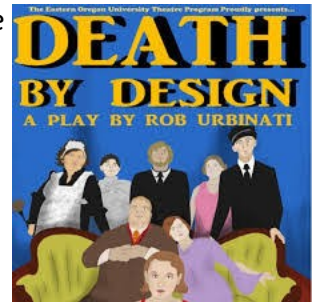
Play On by Rick Abbott, published by Samuel French ©1980 is a play, *A Murder Most Foul*, within a play. Cast: Three men, three women, and three characters of either gender. Ages run the gamut from 20s to 80! Set entails your typical folding-chair couch for the first act, a few set pieces and a new wall for dress rehearsal (Act II) and Victorian period furniture and décor for Act III. The “director” needs a place in the audience so he/she can be seen. *Play On* opens during a rehearsal a few days before dress and it is a nightmare (we’ve all been there!) Actors clash: a know-it-all, a diva who has the playwright’s ear, a drunk, and a newbie who has to be home early. When the playwright arrives with more changes, the furor amps up. Act III uses a strobe light to show the entire play at warp speed. Sound effects are fun because they seldom work the way they are supposed to. Costumes are casual until the last act, where full Victorian/British garb is needed. This play will remind



you of some of the exquisite pain you suffer when you lose a prop, flub a line or find yourself on stage with a dipsomaniac, or worse, alone!

Death by Design: A Comedy with Murder,*

is published by Samuel French ©2015. Revised by Rob Urbinati, this is a British drawing room mystery in the witty vein of Noel Coward. This “comedy with murder” needs a deft director, and skilled comedic actors with British accents. *Death by Design* is set in the messy, but comfortable living room of country house in 1932 -- a set dresser’s dream. And a scratchy, skipping gramophone. Walter (40s-60s), a conservative, stuffy politician visits the vain playwright, Edward Bennett and his beautiful, actress wife, Sorel, (both 40-60s) as she has invited Walter for an assignation. Walter is murdered. As with Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express*, all the characters have a motive. There is Bridget, the Irish maid (30-50); Jack, the randy chauffeur (20s-40s); Victoria, the bohemian, the plain Alice, and the radical, Eric (age not terribly important). Walter’s murder takes place on a dark stage, as each character sneaks in, and pantomimes killing him. Actors need to be very precise in their dialogue, as this show is full of hilarious and subtle word play and witticisms, which could easily be obscured. Fun moments: Edward and Sorel constantly jest and joust while breaking into a waltz now and then; Victoria, the bohemian, stages an interpretative dance, where the stuffy Walter plays “Wall,” Sorel, “Tree;” and after the murder, with Walter comfortably dead on the sofa, a “festive and gay” party breaks out, while Victoria dances “Lament Macabre”! Good, clean fun, but due to the sophisticated and voluminous dialogue I would recommend this show for mature teens and up.



*Another version, *Death by Design: A Comedy with Songs and Murder*, has the Bennetts singing charming songs and playing piano on stage.