



CALLBOARD

April 2020

Bay City and Traverse City conferences cancelled; Escanaba still on for May 9!

Our travelling Spring Conferences are hanging on by a thread -- we've had to cancel the first two because of the state-wide ban on meetings. However, Escanaba is currently full-on for their May 9 session, as of today (March 25.)

As planned all along, the Saturday classes will be two hours long and you get to select one morning class and one afternoon class. You can arrive to take the two classes in one day or you can stay at a nearby hotel – they have reserved blocks of rooms with special reduced rates for our attendees. so sign up today at ctam.online/2020-spring-otr-registration/.

May 9: Players de Noc (Escanaba)

Players de Noc
700 1st Ave S
Escanaba, MI 49829
(906) 786-8760

Escanaba will be offering two Youth level workshops. We are offering sections of Youth Improv and Musical Theatre. The Youth instructors are Enda Breadon & Micah DeShazer (both presenters come to us from Children's Theatre of Madison WI).

Escanaba will once again be hosting a Welcome Mixer/Registration Pick-up on Friday night at the Terrace Hotel.

The Registration cost this year will be \$52.00.

Registration will include Friday night Mixer/Registration Pick-up with light refreshments and cash bar from 8pm-11pm; Saturday workshops, two of which must be selected at registration; CTAM & Theatre Round Table; a ticket to their Saturday evening performance of *Cemetery Club*; and a closing reception with refreshments following the performance.





**Community Theatre
Association of Michigan**

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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.

Updated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Administrator and should be sent to ctamthrives@gmail.com.

From the Board of Directors

CTAM encourages all community theatres to comply with the stay-at-home order that Governor Whitmer put in place beginning today, March 24. The order, in its entirety, is available on the State of Michigan website.

We are far from 'essential services' and the fastest way to get back to rehearsing and producing shows for our audiences is to make sure we are part of the solution.

The safety of our staff, volunteers and audience-goers is everyone's highest priority and, while this will significantly impact everyone in a variety of ways, we know that each affiliate organization will thoughtfully evaluate this threat and the response that seems most appropriate for them.

AACT (American Association of Community Theatres) has created a Facebook Covid-19 Resource Group that you might find helpful. Please join, yourself, and take the time to spread the word on this. Theatres and individuals do not need to be a member of AACT to join their Facebook group.



CTAM Calendar of Events

May 9, 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





The prez Sez...

by Betsy Willis

On Sunday, March 22nd the CTAM Board conducted their regularly scheduled meeting by way of Zoom. We were supposed to meet after seeing many of you at CTAM On the Road at the Pit and Balcony Theatre in Saginaw, which we all would have preferred. It was clear we are all weathering the isolation we are in with a degree of humor or perhaps it's theatrical madness. There was a Viking hat, a sword fight, giraffe ears, a beard competition (in which Sara and I could not compete), parakeets singing, one person appearing to be in outer space, clocks chiming, and an amazing show of solidarity and forward progress amidst the humor.

One of the most important things that came out of the meeting is that we are all in this together. All theatres, large and small, are making sacrifices, experiencing financial setbacks, coping with the disappointment of performers, crews, and audience members: and missing the camaraderie with our theatre families, on which we thrive. As your statewide support system, we on the Board of CTAM, want you to know we are here to support your theatre in whatever way we can. We are working on assistance that can be tangibly measured, but in the meantime, we are offering you a listening ear or whatever knowledge we have that could be helpful.

In the next few days, someone in your theatre will be hearing from the CTAM Board member assigned to your Affiliate Group. Please take his/her call or respond to his/her email, if it is just to say what you are doing to keep your volunteers and audience members engaged as we wait this out. We can use that information as a learning tool and forward it to others. If you are not the contact person for your group

but you want to speak with one of us, Board member emails are on Page 2 and the [CTAM website](#) or you may call me directly at 231.838.0269. Help us help you!

In hopes that we can all come through this healthy or at least restored to health:

- Keep your physical distance.
- Wash your hands.
- Keep in touch with friends and family by phone, Facetime, Zoom, email, Portal, etc.
- Particularly if you are in one of the high-risk groups, stay home.
- Just for now, try to be a rule follower – I know this is a difficult ask for us creative types.
- Do not be a toilet paper hoarder – think of this as an ensemble performance... from a distance, of course.

Santé, my friends!

Don't be a playwriting fool!

Get that clever dialog down on paper, flesh out those characters and remember to proofread your work as you enter the **CTAM**

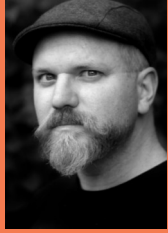
playwriting contest with your brilliant script. Deadline is May 15. Entry instructions, tips and the new judging criteria are on the webpage <http://ctam.online/playwriting-contest-rules/>.

Have questions? Email contest chairs Pat and Leo Paveglio at ctamplaywriting@gmail.com.



It seems to me...

By Dexter Brigham



EIGHT STRATEGIES FOR THEATRES DURING THE COVID-19 SHUTDOWN

I've been sitting in this chair for what seems like hours, trying to figure out what to say that hasn't already been said. As of this moment, in a week where each moment has evolved into something completely new and more depressing, the world has shut down, closed its borders and sent us all home to wait out the coronavirus.

Every community theatre I know of has cancelled all upcoming performances for at least the next month. We are all trying to balance our love for our artistic homes with our roles as responsible members of our community in order to protect those who might be vulnerable to the virus. It is both an easy choice and an incredibly painful one, as this worldwide shut-down is anathema to everything theatres require to thrive: gathering, connection and sharing.

It is a universal truth that all theatres operate on razor thin profit margins, and for many the line between a successful season and bankruptcy is the width of a single grant application. But all community theatres are not the same, and the threat to smaller companies over the next few months is worse than to larger theatres who enjoy endowments (not that there's much left of them at this point).

If you are a smaller community theatre, here are a few actions you might consider:

1. Do not assume that this is going to pass in a few weeks. It is entirely possible the restrictions will remain in place for two months or longer. Plan accordingly. If you delay action, you might burn through thousands of precious dollars that might otherwise have been used to hunker down.
2. If you haven't already, cancel your programs for at least the next month, and be prepared to extend longer if needed. This includes smaller gatherings like classes and rehearsals. Epidemiologists are very good at tracing local outbreaks back to their origin, and no business wants to be identified as the epicenter of an outbreak.

3. Shut down your operations immediately, so that your only ongoing expenses are utilities, insurance and other essentials.
4. Place your employees on furlough, allowing them to apply for the recently expanded unemployment benefits. This one is tough, I know, but the government passed the unemployment extension specifically to help furloughed employees stay afloat, which helps businesses stay afloat. Use the resources that are being made available to make sure your theatre survives.
5. Reach out to your subscribers, single ticket holders and donors and request that they not ask for refunds. If they do, give it freely. Your patrons' trust is worth more than \$25.
6. Reach out to your volunteers, make sure they understand the situation, and ask them for help if it's needed. If they are at risk, make sure they stay home for the time being.
7. Figure out what you CAN do. Look at your mission, and develop an outreach plan that serves your community. Theatre's goal of bringing people together hasn't changed. It is even more important now than ever. In fact, our role in this moment is to fight against the barriers that are in place to make sure our community doesn't become isolated. There are lots of excellent resources and ideas that are beginning to emerge.
8. Plan for what comes next. Because, at some point, this will end, and we will poke our heads above ground and start picking up the pieces. And those who are ready for that day, with fundraising strategies, programming, revised budgets, and good communication with their patrons, members and volunteers, will have an advantage over those who don't.

There's no avoiding the stark reality of what we are facing, friends. Please reach out to other community theatres for assistance if you need it, and I'm sure our friends at CTAM will offer their best efforts to help as well.

"See you on the other side of the war." -Hamilton

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.



Online Script Reading Experiment

Lapeer Community Theatre (LCT) has a Facebook site called Lapeer Theater Friends. Member Bob MacRae wondered in a post if we could do a script reading online. I had just finished writing a ten-minute play for five actors and wanted to have a table read of it. Opportunity knocked!

There are other online apps for group audio/visual conferences such as FaceTime and Zoom, but I chose Skype because I am familiar with it. The app is free and you can use it from your phone or laptop.

Theatre pals Bob MacRae, Cindy Jackson, Bev Hilliard, and Deanna Brownfield volunteered to participate and I emailed them a copy of the script. Each was assigned a part and downloaded the app. I set up the call for a Saturday morning.

Everyone joined in and we read the play. Everyone could be seen and heard clearly. (Photo below is a screen shot of what it looked like!) It was also nice to see and talk to other people outside of my house!

With the advent of “social distancing,” this application gives theatre groups a safe opportunity to continue with script reads and board meetings. It also opens up opportunities for people in remote locations to participate too. Give it a shot. Start with something small so everyone can get a feel as to how things work. Contact me for questions or if you need a reader. Have fun!

Richard Hingst
richardhingst@yahoo.com



Board appoints Michael Wilson as Vice President

At their recent meeting, the CTAM Board accepted the resignation of Patrick Hubbard as Vice President. In his place, they appointed current Board member Mike Wilson as Vice President.

This vital position is responsible for all conferences and festivals. Remember that 2021 is an AACT-fest year, so that activity will be ramping up soon!

Although the location has not been announced yet, the 2020 Fall Conference will be the weekend of October 9-11, so plan now for that exciting annual event.

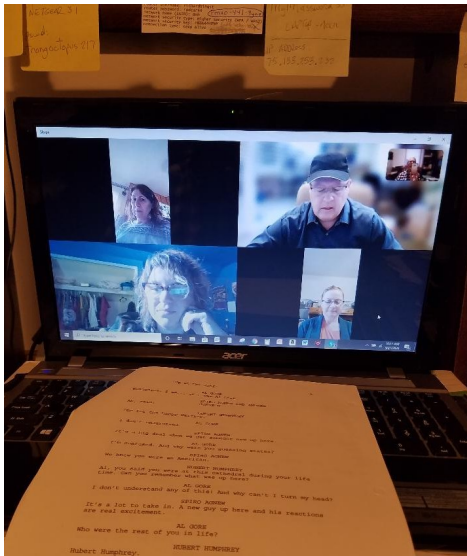
Say hello to Concord Theatricals: Publisher conglomerate emerges

Concord Music has announced that they have acquired Samuel French, Inc., the theatre publisher and licensor, with which most of us have dealt. With this acquisition, the company has formed Concord Theatricals.

The professional and amateur theatrical licensing catalogs of Samuel French, Rodgers & Hammerstein Theatricals, Tams-Witmark, and Concord Music's joint venture with Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Group, The Musical Company, comprise Concord Theatricals.

The merger makes the newly-formed company a substantial global licensing house. It also provides services to musical theatre producers and creators. Services include theatrical licensing, music publishing, and cast recordings. In addition, Concord Theatricals will develop, license, produce, and invest in new musicals for first-class productions around the world.

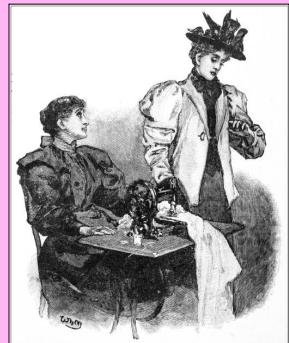
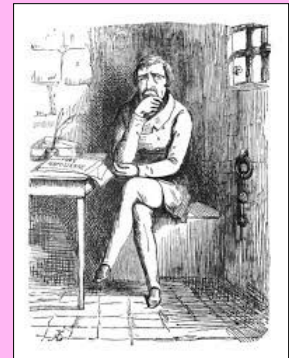
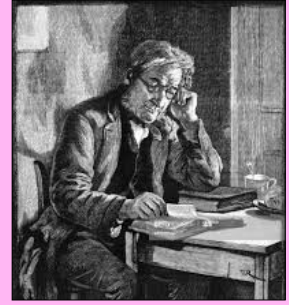
Apparently you must go to the Concord Theatricals website to begin your journey to access the rights.



Public Service Announcement

Some things to do during your sequestration when there's nothing else to do and you can't go anywhere!

- 1. Get serious and finally write that play that lives in your head. The deadline for the CTAM Playwriting Contest is May 15 -- either this year or for 2021!*
- 2. Use this time to start discussions about entering AACTfest next spring. Read scripts, choose the show and begin figuring out budgets. It will be time well spent!*
- 3. Memorize a long monologue, then call a good director/friend and spend some time talking about your interpretation.*
- 4. Bring your theatre resume up to date.*
- 5. Go through your fabric stash and give most of it to the costume room. You'll never use it all anyhow!*
- 6. Go through the tools in your workshop and return the theatre's tools to the building; donate your extra and duplicate tools.*
- 7. Go to www.broadwaycares.org/help2020 and donate to support today's young gypsies in New York who are without income during these lay-offs. They need our help.*
- 8. Check on your older friends and members to see if they are OK or need some help. Take them a bowl of soup for lunch.*
- 9. Read plays. Read more plays.*



The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Hope it's springy where you are! So sad we had to cancel two of the on-the-road conferences; let's all try to get up to Escanaba for May 9!

The 39 Steps is one of the most original, hilarious, and challenging plays I have ever seen. How does one mount a production based on a 1935 film that includes a train chase, a plane crash, murder by knife, true love and a political speech that eventually asks "why can't we just get along?" John Buchan wrote the novel in 1915. In 1935, Alfred Hitchcock created the most famous film adaptation (there are several). Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon created the comic theatrical adaptation in 1995 using just four actors. Published by Samuel French (now known as Concord Theatricals!), this latest parody was adapted by Patrick Barlow, first produced in 2005.

The challenges (and there are many): one man plays the world-weary, suave Richard Hannay, throughout; one woman plays three characters, and the two "Clowns" play the other 250 roles, including men, women, villains, children, and the occasional inanimate object. The plot is almost impossible to describe. Briefly, Hannay meets a woman who says she is a spy, and then she is murdered in his home. His quest to clear his name takes him all over England and Scotland. The many scenes are created at a manic pace by the two Clowns with insane quick changes. Many, many, light and sound cues. Staging this show requires an intense level of imagination and creativity. Hitchcock fans will enjoy the many allusions to his other films such as *Vertigo*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Rear Window*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *North by Northwest*. If you get a chance to see it, run, don't walk



and get there! You will understand why it received the "Unique Theatrical Experience" award in 2007. Suitable for ages 11 and up. NOTE: I ran across the newsletter of a www.WU?therep that produced this show during its 2009-10 season. Check it out if you want to know more about everything 39 Steps.

Moon Over Buffalo by Ken Ludwig ©1995 is a two-act farce, also Published by Concord Theatricals, that takes place onstage and backstage at the Erlanger Theater, Buffalo, New York in 1953. The cast of four men and four women features: George Hay, 55, and wife Charlotte, 50ish, two aging, but still ambitious divas. The Hays, former Broadway stars, have taken their run-down touring troupe to Buffalo. Daughter, Rosalind, 20s, has left the troupe to pursue a "normal" life with her fiancé, strait-laced weatherman, Howard, 30s. Charlotte's mother, Ethel, plays 70-80, is the troupe's ornery seamstress, deaf when she wants to be. To complicate matters further, Paul (20s-30s), Rosalind's ex, is the stage manager. The backstage frenzy begins when Eileen, 20s, the troupe's ingénue, tells George she is pregnant. In revenge, Charlotte goes out with their lawyer, Robert Maynard, her current paramour. Upset, George gets very drunk. More turmoil ensues when they hear producer, Frank Capra will be attending the matinee, looking for actors for his latest film. Ethel and Paul work hysterically getting George in his Cyrano costume, although *Private Lives* is on the schedule. Truly, *Moon Over Buffalo* is a full-blown farce, and while farce needs to be fast, there are points where some more relaxed pacing would enhance the production. The characters of Ethel,



Howard, Paul, and Richard can present a calming counterpoint to the slamming, yelling, running etc. Needed: a Cyrano de Bergerac costume and nose tear-away pants; a wall-mounted ironing board that pops out at the worst and best times. Suitable for all ages. *Moon Over Buffalo* will be onstage at the Community Circle Theatre in Grand Rapids, MI from June 4-20.