



What? Who? Why?

**CTAM**  
Community Theatre Association of Michigan

# CALLBOARD

May 2020

## Playwriting deadline is upon us: May 15



Last Call!! May 15 is the deadline for your entry in this year's CTAM playwriting contest. You've been socially distancing for a while now – lots of time to be finalizing

your play. Now it is time for those final edits, last read through and final formatting of your masterpiece. Now is the time to hit the send button. All the details are available at <http://ctam.online/playwriting-contest/>

Have questions? Email contest chairs Pat and Leo Pavegio at [ctamplaywriting@gmail.com](mailto:ctamplaywriting@gmail.com).



## COVID-19 claims Escanaba Spring Conference as victim!

The last of the three CTAM Spring Conference weekends has been cancelled! It was scheduled for May 9, but is now cancelled. All refunds for registration should have been returned by now.

After Bay City and Traverse City cancelled their gatherings as dictated by Executive Order of the Governor, Escanaba held out for as long as they could. But they finally capitulated, not knowing when the quarantine would be lifted. It was the correct decision for everyone's safety.

Many thanks to all three groups for agreeing to host one of the On-The-Road conferences. CTAM knows the planning and coordination it takes to host a conference and we are so grateful to each of the groups. We also appreciate the workshop leaders, pictured left, who had agreed to travel with the conference and present their information three times! What a wonderful cache of talented folks we have!



Top left, Stephen John with a directing class on *The Empathetic Design Process*.

Top center, Ben Zylman, presenting an acting class on *Character Study*.

Top right, CTAM President Betsy Willis was to present an all-day class on *Why They Call it Show Business*.



Lower left, Michael Wilson was going to present a session on *making faux food for on-stage*.

**HELPING COMMUNITY THEATRE THRIVE IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1961!**



**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](mailto:mellbee@earthlink.net). Updated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Administrator and should be sent to [ctamthrives@gmail.com](mailto:ctamthrives@gmail.com).

**Food for thought:**

Wondering what will happen to your theatre this year? Me too. So many questions, with no possible way to answer them.

In their program for the 100-year celebration of Bay City Players, Leeds Bird wrote that “This season our attitude is that it’s fine that we’re 100, but that makes us sound old. We’re celebrating Season 100 as a kickoff to the next 100 years to show people we’re looking ahead and not stagnating or looking back. It’s very important that people think of us as dynamic and vital.”

This is an essential attitude as we all face our next season after going dark for the Covid-19 pandemic? Life may never be the same, so this is an opportunity to rethink and retool old ways of doing and thinking.

*-- Tara Western*

**Remember your members:**

During our forced sabbatical, you would be wise to remember your volunteers and how several months of theatrical inactivity might give them the opportunity explore other activities that don’t include you. Model airplane flying, for example, or skeet shooting, or ‘57 Chevy restoration!

Gently remind them how much fun you’ll have when you restart things, what great friends they’ve made and how their creativity helps with what you do for the community.

How, you ask?

- Special edition of newsletter, rather than suspending it.
- Organize some theatre games that members can play remotely.
- Put together a meet-in-the-parking lot social where people stay in their cars and chat through open windows.
- Plan a honking parade for one (or more) of your members who is sick, COVID or not.

It’s a challenge but keeping your name in front of your volunteers will pay long-term rewards.

*-- Mary Lou Britton*



## Bay City Players read books for kids on YouTube

Bay City Players sponsored a great project presented to them by super active volunteer, Erin Frye. Erin suggested using Players performers to read five books and post them on YouTube during March, National Reading Month. Well, it happened. Kids loved it. It was a great event for National Reading Month.



Erin Frye

Erin took full charge: selected the stories, cleared rights with the publisher, lined up the readers and recording technician. A couple of things stood out in the lineup of stories. First, Terre Blair Hamlich (widow of famous Broadway composer

Marvin Hamlich) was available to read a book written especially about Marvin discovering his talents on the piano. Additionally, Erin made sure St. Patrick's Day had a fine Irish tale.

These are the books and their readers:

*Marvin Makes Music*, read by Terre Blair Hamlich; *Ollie On Stage*, read by Cruz Juarez; *Finn McCool and the Great Fish*, read by Margaret and Leeds Bird; *M Is for Mitten*, read by Todd Little; and *The Edmund Fitzgerald: The Song of the Bell*, read by Elizabeth Dewey.

But now COVID-19 quarantine upon us, there is even more reason for kids (and adults) to enjoy this site. Simply go to YouTube; type in Bay City Players. And you'll find all five stories (and a lot more Players info, should you be interested). A perfect time to share these with friends. Little did Erin know her wonderful project would become so far reaching. Thanks, Erin Frye. What's next?



*Drama doesn't just walk  
into your life out of  
nowhere. You either  
create it, invite it in or  
associate with people that  
bring it on!*

*-Anonymous*

## CTAM Board pushing through quarantine

With the cancellation of the Escanaba Spring Conference weekend, the date of the May Board meeting has been changed to Sunday, May 17, and it will be a remote Zoom meeting.

Board members are continuing to make their calls to each individual affiliate group to see what's going on and to be sure that CTAM is meeting your needs.

It seems to me...

By Dexter Brigham



## A Different Year Than the One We Planned

It is breathtaking how quickly our reality has changed. Two months ago, the coronavirus was something we saw on the news and talked about in the office. A month ago, it changed our lives and brought the world to a hard, but temporary, stop. And today, as we look ahead to next month, next season and next year, we are now realizing just how far and wide this event will impact our lives and our theatres.

Broadway is closed. All theatre in America are closed. Most theatres have cancelled their summer productions. And many have already been forced to make changes to their 20-21 season. Conditions on the ground are evolving quickly as everyone scrambles to get our feet under us. I've spent more time on webinars and virtual roundtables in the past 5 weeks than I have ever in my life. It's inspiring to see the work and innovation happening in all areas of our art form. And I thought it might be helpful to provide a summary of the things I am learning. Here's a quick FAQ on the latest from the community theatre world:

### *When will we be able to hold performances again?*

It appears that Governor Whitmer will begin lifting elements of the shutdown in early May. This will be done in steps, and might be reversed if there is a spike in new cases. Large gatherings of more than 50 or 100 people are likely to be among the last restrictions to be lifted, meaning that community theatres need to plan for the possibility of restricted capacity. There will not be a vaccine available until the middle of next year, so the time horizon for restrictions is very long.

### *Can I livestream my production?*

This is the question everyone is asking right now, and the answer is a solid "maybe." Livestreaming has not historically been among the group of rights that our licensing companies (MTI, Dramatists, Concord, etc.) have been responsible for, and they are now working night and day to acquire the ability to license for livestreaming. Each show is different, based on who owns the other rights to any given show, but the good news is that many, if not most shows have been able to get permission to stream. Here are some things to remember about streaming, though:

A performance license does not give you permission to livestream or record a performance. Livestream rights must be applied for and approved separately.

You will be required to meet certain standards of security and reporting, ensuring that the performance is only available for those who have purchased a ticket.

Livestreaming rights and broadcast rights (recording and re-streaming) are two different things.

Not all shows are available for livestreaming (if, for instance, the rights have been optioned by a large movie studio)

### *When will Broadway reopen, and how will that affect my theatre?*

The Broadway League has not set a reopening date yet, and is still working through all the safety and venue issues that we are. Hopefully, the League, along with Actor's Equity and other trade groups, will develop some guidelines that will be helpful to regional and community theatres as well. That said, it will be some time until Broadway reopens, and when it does it will look very different than it did before. The closure will have long term ramifications for us as well, as the availability of amateur rights will be affected by the Broadway and touring industry struggling to get back on their feet.

### *How can we ensure our patrons' safety?*

Unfortunately, there is no place to go to find "best practices" for this moment, since it is unprecedented. And the science

(Continued, page 5)



(Brigham column continued from page 4.)

we need to guide our decisions takes time. We are all working hard to figure out the best way to bring patrons back to our theatres safely. There is some emerging research that shows that live concert venues and theatres are among the places that patrons are least willing to attend in the next few months. This implies that not only do we need to ensure our patron's safety, but

we also need to make sure they feel comfortable and safe.

There's no sugarcoating this moment, my friends. The community theatre world will be a different place on the other side of this challenge. Our job at the moment is to look ahead, to innovate, and to fight to keep our theatres alive so that we can thrive once again.

## The Sauk innovates with monologues written in quarantine

Although the theatre is closed, productions are on hold and rehearsals have halted, The Sauk, Hillsdale County's community theatre, is keeping theatre alive with a new project. LIVING ROOM MONOLOGUES has brought three world premiere monologues to Facebook every week. The five-week project is designed to



Trinity Bird

"keep us together while we're apart."

"The Sauk is dedicated to the creation of new theatrical works," said Sauk Executive Director and CTAM Board member Trinity Bird. "Theatre has always been a reflection of society. What better time to create art than now?"

Bird came up with the idea and suggested it to a playwright friend. "Within a couple hours I had a script and full board support of the project," Bird added. "Every person I asked said yes and within an hour I had 14 writers lined up."

The playwrights represent local, state and national writers. All but two of the writers have had work produced at The Sauk in prior seasons or are on the schedule for this upcoming year. Each week, three playwrights were given a topic. They had approximately 48 hours to write a monologue. Then, an actor was chosen to learn the monologue and perform the piece. New monologue performances have been uploaded to The Sauk's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/thesauk](http://www.facebook.com/thesauk)) each Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. The complete collection of monologues can be found at [www.thesauk.org/monologues.html](http://www.thesauk.org/monologues.html).

The SAUK PRESENTS  
**LIVING ROOM**  
*Monologues*  
WORLD PREMIERES TO KEEP US TOGETHER WHILE WE'RE APART  
EVERY FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8 P.M.  
AND SUNDAYS AT 3 P.M. THROUGH APRIL  
ONLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE!  
@THESAUK

"This is our way of keeping theatre alive during this unique, unprecedented time," Bird said. "If people can't come to the theatre, we will bring the theatre to them."

The Sauk presents new works each season. Every summer, the "Plays-in-Development" program matches playwrights with actors and directors to develop new plays. The Sauk also presents world premiere short plays each year in its "Sauk Shorts" production. Earlier this year, The Sauk was one of six community theatres in the country to be a producing theatre for the American Association of Community Theatre NewPlayFest.



# The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Happy May! As I write this, I have no idea what May will bring in terms of theatre, or anything else, for that matter! So many groups are finding ways to do theatre without physical contact...we are a creative bunch!

Published in 2020, *Holmes and Watson: The Game's Afoot*, adapted by Jon Jory, consists of four separate one-acts which can be done separately or together. This was a free read (minus the ending to the fourth act!) from Playscripts, sent to my email. Each one-act is a separate story. Watson and Holmes are in all four acts, of course, and Jory recommends that the gender of the actors should be changed at least at intermission, if not every act. Thusly, *The Game's Afoot* can be done with an ensemble of nine or 22. Jory strongly suggests that the show be gender flexible with at least one Sherlock and one Watson being played by a woman. Lestrade should always be a woman! Besides the three main characters, men and women of a variety of ages and sizes can be cast. The set is brilliant. The stage level is for all outdoor scenes and scenes without furniture. A riser, eight inches up is for indoor scenes with minimal furniture and the highest riser, eight inches up again, is for Holmes' den and Watson's Baker Street "abode." Because of this design, the four mysteries/adventures run seamlessly. Frequently, Watson narrates the action, taking the audience from one plot point to another. Lots of lighting cues, and set changes take place during dialogue: seamless! Because of the minimal set, I feel period costumes, set pieces and props should be as authentic as possible. Fun Fact: Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle have been in the public domain since



2014, thus the many iterations you see on big screens and small. (Don't forget, you can read David MacGregor's two Sherlock Holmes plays (recently performed at the Purple Rose) for free by emailing him at [dmacgregor77@gmail.com](mailto:dmacgregor77@gmail.com).)

*Miracle on South Division*, published by Playscripts ©2012 was written by Tom Dudzick, author of the *Over the Tavern* trilogy. Once again, Dudzick uses his 1950s childhood memories of Buffalo, New York for this humorous script. In 1942, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Clara Novak's father in his barber-shop. To commemorate the event, he has a 20-foot statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary erected. Through the years, healings and donations have made the Novak family feel special. Clara, first generation Polish-American (late 60s) is deeply rooted in the same neighborhood as the statue, but it is now mostly urban blight. Her three children: Beverly, late 30s, Ruth, mid 30's, and Jimmy, 30ish, revert to the immaturity of their adolescence when they come together in Clara's kitchen one early fall day in 2012 for Ruth's "meeting." While developing a one-woman show about the family statue, Ruth uncovers many secrets. Dudzick's realistic, hilarious but



charming dialogue and the fully realized characters keep the play clipping along. The secrets revealed are shocking but eventually accepted by the family, encouraging them all to live richer, fuller lives. The 85-90-minute show has no intermission but Dudzick helpfully has included notes if you should wish to have one. A guide for turning this into a Christmas play is also in the notes. *Miracle on South Division* is based on a true story; a half a block from Dudzick's father's tavern, the neighborhood barber erected an 18-foot shrine to the Virgin Mary. She had appeared to him with a message of world peace.....according to the barber, she was for it. If your group hasn't produced, or you haven't read *Over the Tavern*, please consider it. It's one of my personal favorites.