



CTAM
Community Theatre Association of Michigan

October 2020

CALLBOARD

CTAM Fall Conference starts in less than two weeks! **Daily webinars and roundtables featured** **October 12 through 17**

This year's CTAM Fall Conference will be held virtually. The conference begins on Monday, October 12, and runs daily through Saturday, October 17. Each evening at 6:00 p.m., a virtual interactive class/webinar will be available. Additionally, on Tuesday and Thursday a virtual roundtable discussion will follow at 7:00 p.m. The Conference will conclude on Saturday with a keynote speaker at 4:00 p.m., followed by our Annual Meeting and Elections at 5:00 p.m., and a roundtable table discussion on future direction of community theatre at 6:00 p.m.

Corresponding with the Board's focus on diversity in community theatre, the keynote speaker on Saturday early evening, October 17, will be **Kristofer Geddie**, Director of Diversity and General Manager for Venice Theatre (Florida). In addition to being a stellar actor, Kristofer has a background in diversity implementation and will share some insights for all of us to be thinking about.

Please see page 3 for a complete schedule for the Fall Conference, suitable to cut out and post on your refrigerator or monitor.

This year's workshops and roundtables are listed on our website, along with photos and bios of all the presenters.

The Fall Conference will be presented free of charge, but everyone should register for the conference on our website in order to receive a Zoom link to the classes you select. <http://ctam.online/virtual-fall-conference-2020/>



HELPING COMMUNITY THEATRE *THRIVE* IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1961!



**Community Theatre
Association of Michigan**

2019-20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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.

Notice of CTAM Annual Meeting and Elections

The CTAM 2020 Annual Meeting will be held virtually on

Saturday, October 17, at 5:00 p.m.

Nominees for election to the Board of Directors are listed on Page 4 of this newsletter.

Zoom access codes will be sent to everyone registered prior to the meeting.

What do your volunteers think about coming back?

Get a sense of what your volunteers are worried about, or what they need from you before they come back. A survey, facilitated conversation, or focus group can be a great way to identify volunteer concerns or needs. Include information on what you anticipate volunteering to look or feel like – would you be comfortable on stage with many others, dancing, singing and swirling about? Masked or unmasked? Once you get feedback from onstage and tech volunteers, ensure that all other stakeholders have an opportunity to weigh in on what they need to feel comfortable coming back. Being prepared should help make the transition back a little easier!



CTAM Calendar of Events

October 12-17, 2020	Fall Conference and Annual Meeting. New virtual format.
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Virtual Fall Conference schedule listed

All workshops/webinars at the Fall Conference begin promptly at 6:00 p.m., followed on Tuesday and Thursday by Roundtable Discussions at 7:00.

You must register (at no charge!) for the sessions you are interested in so that the Zoom contact numbers can be sent to you in advance of the sessions!

If you cannot attend the workshops and roundtable discussions, they will be posted after the Conference so you can watch them on your own time. Check out our website after the Conference for the latest postings!



CTAM Fall Conference Schedule

Monday, October 12, 6 p.m. - *Disaster Recovery for Community Theatres*

Tuesday, October 13, 6 p.m. - *Creating Faux Food for the Stage*

7 p.m. - Roundtable: *Handling Intimacy on Stage*

Wednesday, October 14, 6 p.m. - *Show 'Business' for a reason*

Thursday, October 15, 6 p.m. - *Developing a Technical Theatre Program for Youth*

7 p.m. - Roundtable: *Stage Management*

Friday, October 16, 6 p.m. - *Character Study*

Saturday, October 17 - 4 p.m. - Keynote speaker, Kristofer Geddie

5 p.m. - Annual Meeting and Elections

6 p.m. - Roundtable: *Where does Community Theatre go from here?*

Find the Donate Button!

You will need to register online for each individual workshop, class or roundtable you plan to virtually attend! (That's so we can send you the contact names and numbers for you to use when the time comes!) <http://ctam.online/virtual-fall-conference-2020/>

We've added a 'donate' button on the conference registration pages so you can easily make a donation in lieu of a registration fee. It's all FREE, of course, but wouldn't this be a nice time to make a donation?



Nominees for Board of Directors -- Saturday, October 17, 2020

The following four nominees have agreed to stand for election to the CTAM Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 17. Please review these bios and prepare to vote for your favorites!

RHONDA LEHAN



Rhonda's love of theatre began at an early age, but she discovered it was a passion when she became an intern at GRCT in 1998. After receiving her theatre degree, she has worn many hats; working in the box office, as a House Manager, Stage Manager, Director, Props and Costume designer and as a teacher at both theatre classes and summer camp. She was even seen onstage a few times! Although Rhonda loves both stage management and design, her favorite role is TEACHER. For local educational organizations, she has taught classes in acting, technical theatre, and summer programs. Rhonda runs the Mill Creek Middle School Drama Club and the Comstock Park High School Drama Club. She is an office manager for IATSE Local 26, Grand Rapids' professional stage-hand union.

N'JERI NICHOLSON



Over the past four years N'Jeri has become increasingly involved in the Detroit theatre community as a choreographer and actress. Her previous roles include: Miss Hannigan (*Annie*), Tess (*Crazy for You*), Rizzo (*Grease*), and a sword-fighting princess and mercenary at The Michigan Renaissance Festival. During the quarantine, N'Jeri has participated in multiple virtual cabarets. She's also partnered with *The DATC* to create her own series of Facebook Live cabarets titled "Lift Every Voice." These cabarets showcase African American talent around the Detroit area, and so far, have benefitted and raised awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement and a local, Black-owned children's theatre. During the day, N'Jeri works as a copywriter at an advertising agency.

JAMIE PETERSON (Incumbent)



Jamie has been part of Players de Noc since he was 15 years old and since has acted, directed, produced, set design, construction, lighting, sound, props, costumes. Running crews....to mopping the stage. Jamie has served on the Board for Players de Noc and held positions of Treasurer, Publicity, and President. While serving on their board, Jamie believes that every action the group takes should be in fulfilling their mission statement, and achieve those goals. Jamie state he is interested in joining the CTAM board, and is confident that he will have something to offer the board. Jamie is also very active in his community and has served as a volunteer firefighter for 20+ years as well as the Coast Guard Auxiliary. During the day he is a Claims Specialist for the Social Security Administration.

MIKE WISNIEWSKI (Incumbent)



Michael has been involved with Bay City Players for many years. He currently serves on the Board of Directors, is a past President, and has volunteered in almost every capacity of the organization. Michael has performed on stage in dozens of shows, has spent countless hours designing and decorating sets and has directed many shows for Bay City Players including *Rent*, *Company*, *Les Miserables*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Crazy for You*, and *Annie*. He has also been in several productions for Midland's Music Society and most recently was seen on stage in Midland's Center Stage Theatre's production of *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*. After serving on the Board of Directors for CTAM he is excited to take on another term to help foster community theatre in our great state.

DON'T PANIC!

Monthly musings by
Chuck Goddeeris



So you have all this time on your hands now and you want to write a play? Fabulous! That's a great use of this time spent in quarantine. Let me provide you some tips for playwrights starting out for the first time as well as for more experienced playwrights to consider.

First rule of playwriting: focus on the dialogue. After all, a play is primarily dialogue. Don't get lost in describing the scene or where the action takes place, stage directions are a hindrance. If I want stage directions I'll pick up a novel. A good, nay a great play, will let the dialogue drive the action. Even a mediocre director or actor can craft good action to go with strong dialogue. Great dialogue just makes it that much easier.

Second rule of playwriting: keep stage directions to a minimum. Stage directions are there to help the reader/viewer understand what is going on physically onstage. If it's not clear from the dialogue that a specific action has to occur, ie. a drink has to be sipped, or an entrance has to be made, or someone has to fall down, then by all means put those stage directions in. If the action is not critical to the story/scene then you probably don't need it in there.

Corollary to the second rule of playwriting: even when describing the stage or scene keep it simple. The more specific you get the more artistic license you take away from the technicians and designers. If you want your script to be widely produced this subtle maneuver of minimally describing the set, if at all, will help more potential directors, script committees, etc visualize something that can happen on their stage. Not all stages are created equal and not every theatre has the same resources, but theatres with great creativity can accomplish the same things a wealthy playhouse can, and sometimes even better with a limited budget.

Third rule of playwriting: read your dialogue out loud to make sure it sounds natural. This seems pretty common sense but is often overlooked. Better yet have a good friend read some of the lines with you or organize a group to read through a

scene. Now, obviously there is some flexibility here if you are doing a period piece or need someone to talk nonsensically or in another language, but make sure it sounds and fits in with the setting/time period of your piece.

Fourth rule of playwriting: avoid adding adverbs on how to deliver a line, or more appropriately don't sell yourself short on your playwriting skills. I see far too many scripts where a note (parenthetical) is listed at the beginning of a line with how to say it. Unless it is absolutely critical that the line is delivered in such a manner that the dialogue doesn't make clear then you may put it in, but nine times out of ten I don't think it's necessary. Beats or pauses are perfectly acceptable, but by sticking in a "crying", "angrily", "matter of factly", etc, you are taking away the actor's ability to act and the director's ability to direct. Most importantly, good dialogue will infer that's how the line should be delivered and anyone is capable of writing good dialogue. Moreover, if it's great dialogue it even gives the actors/directors opportunities to try other manners of delivering the line. The more flexible and accessible your script is, the more likely it can be produced regardless of venue.

Fifth rule of playwriting: have someone proofread your script. As a playwright you know how it's supposed to sound and read but sometimes your computer might miss something on spellcheck or use the wrong word or any number of things will happen and the words on the page or screen don't match what's in your head. Make sure someone else reads it to ensure it is clear and free of grammar and spelling errors (unless intentional). Oftentimes having far too many simple little mistakes like that will limit your script from seeing the stage (when it is permissible to stage things) and every little thing you can do to separate your script from the others will help it become producible!

One last consideration on formatting your script: the cleaner you can make it look the better off you'll be. If you need help with that you can reach out to me directly (charlesgoddeeris@gmail.com) and I can guide you to some sites and/or walk you through the basics. The earlier you can condition yourself to format like a published author the better off you'll be. However, as long as it's easy (and consistent) to distinguish dialogue from character names and those unsightly stage directions then you're well on your way to success!

It seems to me...

By Dexter Brigham



Goin' Virtual: Is It Worth It?

We are now six months into our new reality. First there was the initial panic, and we responded like the generous artistic spirits we are by flooding the world with free content. As we entered the spring months, our whole industry got to work reinventing how we make theatre, how we license theatre, and expanding our definition of what we mean when we say "theatre." And we were successful. By summer we were beginning to roll out new models: parking lot plays, "journey theatre," front yard concerts, street cabarets, Zoom readings, and livestreamed performances, just to name a few.

But now it's fall. The PPP loans have dried up, the restaurants and salons are back open (for the most part), and theatres remain closed, with no re-opening date on the horizon. Our bank accounts are starting to look pretty thin as we struggle to find ways to bring in revenue when our capacity is limited to 10 people indoors. The outdoor capacity of 100 was very helpful in the fall, but the snow is on its way in a few short weeks, and as we all know, there's no outdoor theatre in January in Michigan. We're crazy, but we're not that crazy.

As the temperature drops, and we prepare for many more months of closed venues, our options are limited. Many theatres are putting together a season of virtual events, livestreamed performances and Zoom master classes, hoping that the audiences will come.

But there are still a lot of unanswered questions: Are people tired of Zoom meetings? Is anyone willing to pay for virtual content? Will my less tech-savvy patrons miss out? What's the point?

I would venture that the last question is a good one to focus on. What's the point of all of this



virtual content?

Let's put one thing to rest right away: it's not about revenue. Emerging research, anecdotal experience, and common sense teach us that when local companies start competing in a global market like the internet, the market gets crowded quickly. People don't want to pay for content they can get for free. For my virtual events, I'm generally seeing smaller audiences who are willing to attend only at a lower price point than live events.

There are three reasons why I think it's important for theatre organizations to invest in virtual entertainment.

First, this pandemic has accelerated a trend that was already happening. When we are on the other side of 2020, virtual programming will be here to stay. The quaint days when our online content was comprised of FB advertising and the occasional YouTube video are behind us. It's better for your organization to begin developing your virtual skills and online footprint now than to be caught behind the eight ball in 2022.

Second, people are spending a lot of time online these days, even if they resent every minute of it. If you want to stay a top-of-mind with your donors and subscribers, use this time as an opportunity to stay visible. The difference between your theatre group and Netflix is that your patrons know you, love you, and miss you, and they are interested in investing in your relationship if given the proper incentive.

Third, with your doors shuttered, your artists are starving for action, just like you! Get your artists together and put on a Zoom show just to keep them engaged. Every Friday, after my weekly Shakespeare performance, our acting company stays on the call for an hour after the livestream ends, catching up with each other and connecting with friends. The day when we get back on a real, live stage will come, but in the meantime, don't let your acting company wither on the vine.

I don't have an answer to the financial question. I wish I did. It's probably not virtual, to be honest. But that doesn't mean that virtual programming can't be an important part of setting your organization up for success when we emerge on the other side of this pandemic.



Break a leg, my friends!

The Scoop on Scripts

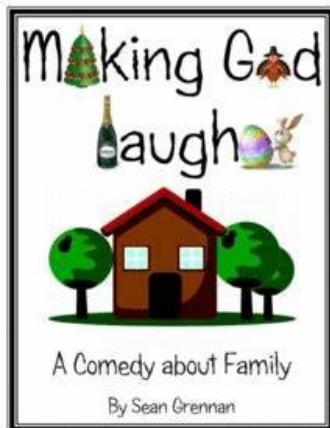
By Tara Western



For this Scoop, I talked to Eric Goldstein who will be directing *Making God Laugh* in the fall of 2021 for Rosedale Community Players. What fun it was discussing set design, directing, acting; I miss that!!

Dramatists Publishing Company's *Making God Laugh* by Sean Grennan ©2014 is a hilarious, thoughtful family comedy. Cast consists of five richly layered characters that will be a joy to play as they age thirty years in this two-act play. The script is full of popular culture references: the 80's man purse, Enron, Mary Kay pink Cadillacs, Hugos, the Bedazzler, shock at the \$1.16 gas prices, the paranoia of Y2K.

Through four holidays the family dynamics are exposed. Patriarch, Bill (40-50) loves Ruthie (same age range) more than she loves him. Richard (mid-late 20s), follows every trend known to each decade. Maddie (mid 20s), struggles with her acting career and never meets Ruthie's expectations. "Father" Thomas (early 20s), is the favored son by religious Ruthie. At the end Ruthie has dementia, Bill has a walker, the priest has a baby, Maddie has a girlfriend, and Richard matures. The play's subtitle is a "comedy of planners". You've heard



the adage: "When man plans, God laughs"? Does the family make God laugh? Hoping to fill the emptiness of her life, Ruthie plans for successful children; God chuckles. Richard plans for wealth; God howls. When Maddie's acting aspirations are foiled by the economy; God snickers. Thomas' plan explodes; God rolls in the aisles. Bill, the non-planner, is happy with his wife, and children as they are, flaws and all.

The family's suburban living room is the setting for all the scenes. You will have to be creative with the set design as Grennan describes entrances

to a hallway, dining room, basement, backroom, and door and window to the outside.

Grennan's detailed costume descriptions are just suggestions but reading them is a delight! Simple sound and lighting, but props will have their hands full. Holidays mean food, lots of it, including the slime-like Fantasia Dip. Also needed: several generations of cameras and phones, plus a Native American drum with matching drumstick, for Richard's foray into the "man movement"!



Playscripts' *Christmas Thieves: A Small Town Radio Play* by Greg Oliver Bodine ©2007 is a one-act comedy set in the radio station of Yule, a small Midwestern town. There's Bjorn, the W-CHZ manager/disc jockey; Madge, the industrious XXL custodian; Mac, the shy engineer; and Rosie, mayor, PTA president and top W-CHZ fan. Last is Old Man Saltzpetter, W-CHZ's largest sponsor and most vocal critic. It's Christmas Eve and Bjorn has planned a fundraiser to maintain independent funding of his "all Polka, all the time" format. The British Masterpiece Players are to perform the radio play, "The Thieves Who Couldn't Stop Sneezing", but are too sick from eating Norwegian pork rinds and lutefisk. Bjorn recruits Rosie, Madge, and Max; they miraculously learn English accents in one minute, and the show goes on. Down the hall, the phones manned by the Cub Scouts are silent. Elated, Old Man Saltzpetter believes he can now change the format to his beloved Disco music. But, of course, the Yule locals come through and Bjorn keeps his Polka format. Stage right has a door to the hallway where we "hear" the Cub Scouts; left, a multi-purpose entrance/exit. The set dressers will enjoy creating a small town's low budget radio station with a turn table, vinyl records, a goldfish, a cow bell and working ON-AIR sign. For the radio play, four music stands, four non-working microphones are needed plus a table with the Foley SFX stuff. Although you can record the radio sound, but I have produced and seen *It's a Wonderful Life-a Radio Play* with the sound effects performed live onstage. The audience loves it!