



CALLBOARD

Next Roundtable planned for April 22

Based on the outstanding success of our March Roundtable on reopening our doors after the pandemic, CTAM is gearing up for another exciting roundtable for our members and members of our affiliate members!

Join us on April 22, at 7pm, as we talk with Tony Award winning Production Designer **Richard Hoover** about his amazing career in theatre, tv and films! His credits read like a compendium of outstanding productions through the years.

No cost to attend; please register in advance on our website at <http://ctam.online/>



Roundtable on re-opening our theatre doors very successful

Pre-session reservations for this event hovered just short of 100 people — the most ever for any of our CTAM-sponsored virtual events! Thanks to everyone who attended the timely topic and participated in the Q&A portion. Many great ideas were shared and it was fun to see what other groups are doing to get ready

for the eventual re-opening. Some groups are already performing for paying audiences in many variations of a theme. Plans for outdoor summer events are also being discussed.



CTAM Administrator Mary Jo DeNolf (also representing Grand Rapids Civic Theatre) served as moderator for the discussion.

Each of the presenters summarized their group's activity and plans for the future. Many thanks to the presenters for their participation and candor.

*Jamie Peterson, [Players de Noc \(Escanaba\)](#)
Rodel Salazar, [Stagecrafters \(Royal Oak\)](#)
Sarah Salerno, [In The Mitten Productions \(Novi\)](#)
Amy Spadafore, [Pit & Balcony \(Saginaw\)](#)
Kirk Wahamaki, [Muskegon Civic Theatre](#)*

If you missed the roundtable, it is available on the CTAM website at <http://ctam.online/>



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

Welcome Ruthann Liagre to the CTAM Board

We welcome a long-standing friend to serve a tour on the CTAM Board — **Ruthann Liagre**, representing the Lebowsky Center in Owosso.



“I was born in Detroit and spent the first 50+ years of my life there. My professional life was spent in hospital human resources and administration. I finished my career at Memorial Healthcare in Owosso where, as luck would have it, I became involved with

the Lebowsky Center for Performing Arts, first as a patron, then as a volunteer for Front of the House. Theater is a magnet. I love the excitement, the people, and the work. It is most satisfying to be part of something that brings such joy and pride to our community. We are fortunate to live in a lovely place by the Shiawassee River and to have found a theater and a community that we love so much.”

Ruthann replaces **Trinity Bird** from The Sauk in Jonesville who found too many things to do in his life and, unfortunately, CTAM lost! Thanks for your many contributions, Trinity. It’s been a good ride!

CTAM Calendar of Events

Wed., April 7 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
Thurs., April 22 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	April Roundtable Webinar with Richard Hoover
Wed., May 5 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
Saturday, May 15	Playwriting Contest entry deadline
Wed., June 2 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
June 14-20	National AACTfest



2020 Dorothy Arnett Awards presented for outstanding volunteerism

It has been more than a year since our theatres have had to pull the curtain down and wait until it was safe to ring up the curtain again, fill the seats and tell the story. Prior to that, a show was conceived, the cast chosen, rehearsals flourished, stories came to life, tickets were sold, patrons were shown to their seats and the curtain opened on yet another production in all our busy community theatres. None of this could take place without the dedication of our volunteers. They are the life blood, back-bone and heart of every community theatre and Dorothy Arnett was one individual whose roots not only run deep in Bay City Players history, but with CTAM as well. She promoted the spirit of volunteering in adults and fostered it in so many young adults and children, believing that valuable, long-term dedication to community theatre should be rewarded.

Community Theatre Association of Michigan is proud to announce the 2020 winners of this prestigious award:

- ★ Kelly McIntyre – Hartland Players
- ★ Dr. Charles “Bud” Vear and his late wife, Gloria Vear – The Sauk
- ★ Rolfe Jenkins – Twin City Players, Inc.
- ★ Greg Burke – Bay City Players
- ★ Brian Townsend – Players Guild of Dearborn

These individuals were nominated by a member

of their local group and the member completing the form was asked to describe the nominees service contributions. I want to share a statement from those submissions, as I feel they show true dedication to their theatre:

“Kelly is well organized, diligent and well respected in our group and we would be lost without her.”

“Bud and Gloria have left a lasting impression on our organization and set a standard for quality volunteerism and artistic excellence.”

“Rolfe has been a theatre patron for decades attending local productions, college productions and theatre around the country and the world. His background and knowledge have been a tremendous asset for TCP.”

“Greg Burke is an amazingly cheerful, dedicated, and selfless volunteer who has given of his time and talents in countless ways over many years.”

“Brian is one of those rare people who are not only incredibly talented in virtually every facet of theatre, but who is also a superb mentor and an overall good person.”

A heartfelt “Congratulations” to this group of dedicated individuals, and a huge thank you to everyone who volunteers their time to make our community theatres not only a place to be creative and utilize talents, but also a place to call home.

—Michael J. Wisniewski, Awards Chair



Brian Townsend



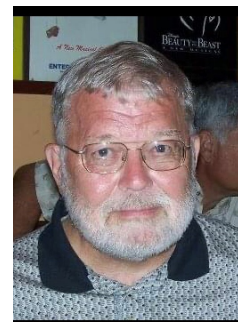
Greg Burke



Bud and Gloria Vear



Kelly McIntyre



Rolfe Jenkins

The Sauk opens with reduced capacity and sold-out audiences!

The Sauk, Hillsdale County's community theatre, reopened March 4 with a production of *The Giver*. Audiences were at 20 percent capacity, socially-distanced and wore masks. While only selling 48 seats, we sold out seven of the eight performances. The cast maintained physical distancing backstage (with taped out "pods" on the floor) and wore clear shields while performing. We increased our cleaning protocol and everyone cooperated to make the entire experience a huge success. Pictured are Noah Honeywell as Jonas and Ron Boyle as The Giver.



Remember to recognize your volunteers this year

National Volunteer Week (April 18-24, 2021) is an opportunity to recognize the impact of volunteer service and the power of volunteers to keep you moving forward. Each year, you should shine a light on the people that inspire us to serve, recognizing and thanking volunteers who lend their time, talent and voice to make a difference in our communities.

National Volunteer Week was established in 1974 and has grown each year, with thousands of volunteer projects and special events scheduled throughout the week. Today, as people strive to lead lives that reflect their values, the expression of civic life has evolved. Whether

online, at the office, or the local community theatre; whether with



a vote, a voice, or a wallet – doing good comes in many forms, and we recognize and celebrate them all.



It seems to me...

By Dexter Brigham



Don't Shoot the Messenger

A few weeks ago, within my circle of theatre friends and co-workers, a social media storm erupted around the creation of an anonymous profile that had begun posting the racial and ethnic statistics of various shows produced by many community theatres in the region. The account did so without comment or editorializing, and was clearly an effort to hold our community accountable to the words and promises our local theatre companies had made to the BIPOC artistic community over the past year. Several of the profiled productions were shows that I had produced, and one had been directed by my wife, so we talked at home quite a bit about our defensiveness when confronted with the overwhelming whiteness of our shows. It was a hard but necessary truth, and we were eventually grateful for the stark reminder of the need for us to be better allies.

The response online, however, was a swift and harsh backlash that effectively sidestepped the purpose of the account and devolved into criticism questioning how the statistics had been collected, who was behind the account, what their motivations were, and what would have been better ways to accomplish the same goal. Friends I have known for years who have never divulged to me that they identified as anything other than white, were posting their 23 and Me results as a way to prove that the postings were wrong. Other friends posted long, cathartic explanations of their casting practices in order to make it clear that they were



not racists and were, in fact, great allies. In short, it was a stunning display of white fragility on full display for everyone to see, including our BIPOC artistic community.

The theatre community tends to view ourselves as liberal, progressive and inclusive, so for someone to imply that we, a community of people who pride ourselves on being anti-racist, were, in fact, racist, was a shocking affront to our identities. It suddenly became very important for the people behind this account to be wrong, to be villains. And a lot of effort went into making this a reasonable reality.

But they were right. Community theatre has been, and continues to be, a predominantly white space with high levels of tokenism both in casts and in season programming, and almost no BIPOC voices at the highest levels of leadership. This is fact. And it is no less a fact for me and my community as it is for the wider industry.

Did this anonymous social media account get some things wrong? Of course it did. Their lack of transparency regarding their data and methods allowed their target audience to dismiss them. They made questionable assumptions about people's ethnic backgrounds for their statistics that itself borders on racism. And they woefully overestimated the capacity of white liberals to handle tough love. But the broad strokes were spot on.

Here's the moral of the story: don't shoot the messenger. Systemic racism is built into the very fabric of our lives, and the community theatre

world has benefitted from it, even those of us who are actively working to dismantle it. If someone in the BIPOC community is angry, aggressive or confrontational about the issue of racism, please remember they have every right to be, and we, as white allies, need to hold off on the tone policing and listen.

And always remember the immortal words of Avenue Q...
"Everyone's a little bit racist."

Don't Panic!

*Monthly musings by
Chuck Goddeeris*



How do you put butts in seats? This is the million-dollar question that every (community) theatre tries to answer on a regular basis, even prior to the pandemic. Unfortunately, I cannot offer a magic bullet to solve this, either pre-pandemic or post-pandemic. What I can do is offer some recommendations to help you build up your organization's brand moving forward.

First of all, don't panic. Many organizations have been around for decades and have established a reputation for producing fine theatre. Your reputation will get you through this more than you realize so please don't panic.

Secondly, continue to keep your audience informed of your plans as to when normal programming will resume. You should have a database of mailing addresses and email addresses that you can use to let them know how excited you are to get back to doing theatre.

Communication is your biggest asset during this time and can take many forms beyond letters and emails. First and foremost is your website and social media channels. Many people frequently check social media sites for news and updates prior to visiting the website. So, update your social media platforms regularly (at least once a week) and save the big announcements for your website. Your social media posts should drive traffic to your website (and ideally a donation button) as you continue to reinforce your brand and your central source of information.

Thirdly, develop alternate methods of regular programming to engage and entertain your audience. Many theatres are making video recordings of zoom readings, radio shows, "we miss you" videos, "what we're doing", etc and posting them to their YouTube channel. New ideas are popping up all the time. You can even do

all sorts of digital/remote fundraisers such as: branded masks, personalized content/videos, auctions for retired set pieces/costumes/props, etc. As long as you create regular content that reflects your organization then you don't have to put all your eggs into a streaming production.

Don't forget to add a note and donation link to your videos and especially on your website. This way your patrons can continue to support you during these difficult times. You can also take it a step further and setup a Patreon account where they can subscribe to your content with monthly donations!

In the end though, communicating your safety protocols, the types of shows you plan to present, and how frequent will be most critical. Creating alternative programming like those mentioned above will become a regular part of your organization, even after we're able to start presenting shows in person again. Develop plans to sustain these practices and it will help diversify and strengthen your organization.

Your reputation is your foundation and now we have to communicate and adapt. Above are just a handful of ways to help reinforce your reputation and strengthen your connection to your audience and talent. As long as you approach these new challenges with the same vigor you put into your regular productions then there is absolutely no reason to panic!



The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Here are the winners of the 2020 CTAM Playwriting contest. First place is *Of Divine Interest* by David Durham; second is *Blood Brothers* by Brad Bowman. Both can be produced by member groups, royalty free, for the next two years.

What do you get when you mix a deep friendship between a lesbian and a gay, two spies, three agents from the Office of Biblical Sciences, two reporters, a rabbi, a minister, a priest, porch people and an angel? Well, it certainly is *Of Divine Interest!*

The cast is seven males, four women, and six of either. Jerry Blevins and his roommate, Fran are 50+. The rest of the cast's ages can range widely. Many of the non-speaking roles can be double cast.

The set is a "great" room. Stage right: a dining room, with a door to a kitchen. Stage left: a sofa facing a very low TV downstage and a landing indicating a upstairs. The upstage wall is the front of the house with an entry door on stage right. This wall has a large picture window overlooks a large porch with bushes in the background. This porch must be large enough to hold several people as the audience sees LOTS of action there. Vertical blinds are a must too. Recently retired Jerry finds out that he is the direct descendant of Jesus Christ. Imagine the excitement, the press, the crowds seeking healing! The Office of Biblical Sciences wants to keep him safe; the spies want his DNA for their countries, the TV anchors want the big story and an angel saves the day.

Caveats: Procuring Jerry's DNA sample creates several "R-rated" moments which are extremely funny, if a bit raunchy. Some adult language. PG 14??

Great running gag: After the crowds show up to meet the Second Coming, anyone who enters the house, barely makes it through the door, with arms and legs of the worshippers being pushed

back outside. During one "procuring DNA" scene, the clergy go all "Hear no evil, See no evil, Speak no evil".

Of Divine Interest has it all: a deep friendship, great stage pictures, plays on words and a satisfying (in so many ways!) ending. Besides the laughs, this play has a lot of heart.

For more information, you can contact David at David.durham@stagescreenandme.com. To see more of his work, go to www.stagescreenandme.com.

Blood Brothers is based on Norse mythology. And as with most myths, this is basically a delightful Nordic soap opera. Odin, the boss god faces a world-ending battle and needs to choose a second-in-command. His wife, Frigg, desperately promotes her son, Baldur, but Thor and Loki, his other sons are also in the running. The illegitimate, Loki, wants Odin to acknowledge him and "does what it takes" with insane results. Odin pretends Loki is his "blood brother," hence the title. The Norns are female storytellers who "weave" the Norse legends. The weaving is a metaphor for the threads that make the patterns of the characters' lives. Their frequent commentary helps the audience understand the plot.

Bowman has turned the tale on its head. Thor, usually, the strongest, is a doofus. A lot of laughs evolve from his antics and dialogue. Bowman's use of humor and modern dialogue, brings a bit of light-heartedness balancing the disfunction of the gods and goddesses who are quite.....uh,.....very violent. As in any soap opera, there's plenty of sexual talk and situations, including adult language. A minimum of seven men and nine women is needed. Many sets are required but can be done fairly simply. The special effects are many and stupendous. Much of the sound is offstage, such as a horse race, and Loki birthing a horse. Lots of challenges, but worth it! Brad can be contacted at yougottacarrythatweight@yahoo.com.

