



CTAM
Community Theatre Association of Michigan

CALLBOARD

June 2021

Spring Conference scores huge hit this year!

Huge thank-yous to everyone who attended classes at our Virtual Spring Conference last month. We cannot thank you enough for your support. We hope you enjoyed the classes and were able to expand your theatre skillset in some way.

If you missed any of the classes or just want to re-watch any of them, they are all available on our YouTube channel at any time using the following links. We found our presenters highly informative and engaging and hope you did too. The classes are available via the following links:

YouTube link to **Monday's** Admin Class:

Including Diversity and Inclusiveness with Christopher Chase Carter
<https://youtu.be/G9tjXmUZUPU>

YouTube link to **Tuesday's** Acting Class:

Auditions for Actors with Ellie Frances
<https://youtu.be/ROzNgvvXO7A>

YouTube link to **Wednesday's** Directing Class:

Preparing for Auditions with Keeley Stanley Bohn, Penny Notter and Stephen Berglund
<https://youtu.be/gtVhQv9eJxw>

YouTube link to **Thursday's** Technical Theatre Class:

Using Multi-media on your sets with Peggy Mead Finizio
<https://youtu.be/htWIAEXJ3vs>

YouTube link to **Friday's** Youth Theatre Class:

Introducing kids to the technical side of theatre
<https://youtu.be/IUIGS2AIF6w>

If you haven't subscribed to our CTAM YouTube channel yet, we highly recommend it! You'll have immediate access to untold riches and be able to go back and find interesting presentations you have missed.



We also offer our huge admiration and thanks to all the Spring Conference presenters. We had the cream of the crop this year and everyone enjoyed the wide spread of available classes.

If you have any suggestions for future class topics, please do not hesitate to let us know. Simply contact ctamthrives@gmail.com with any questions, concerns or comments.

HELPING COMMUNITY THEATRE *THRIVE* IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1951!



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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.

Hit Songs, Dissected

Lyrics, chords, trivia and tidbits — it's easier than ever to learn more about the music you love. Modern life has



eliminated any mystery that once existed in pop music. Want to know a song? Consider these resources.

History. Type a song title into a search engine, such as Google, and you'll often find a Wikipedia post detailing the song's development.

Lyrics. In addition to a song's words popping up on music streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music, there are dedicated lyrics sites, such as Lyrics, AZLyrics and Genius, that can aid your attempts at sing-alongs.

Chord changes. Subscription sites like Chordify provide music for more than 18 million songs. Another site, Chordie, offers charts for free.

Lyric analysis. A number of sites, including Songfacts, SongMeanings and Lyric Interpretations, feature background info and lyric analysis.

Song identification. Don't know a song's title? Apps such as Shazam, SoundHound and Musixmatch can identify tunes by listening to a snippet of the music.

—by Roger Catlin

Reprinted from June 2021 AARP Magazine

CTAM Calendar of Events

Wed., June 2 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
June 14-20, 2021	National AACTfest (virtual)
Sept. 20-25, 2021	CTAM Virtual Fall Conference
Sept. 22-25, 2022	CTAM Fall Conference @ Treetops Resort



Players de Noc getting ready for national AACTfest

On Wednesday, May 12, the team from Colvin Theatrical landed at the Delta County Airport in Escanaba to film *Players de Noc's* AACTFest National Finalist production of the original script, *Jerry's Brain*. As part of presenting a national, virtual festival, each of the 12 qualifying productions were filmed on their local stage by the same film crew so that production values and ambience were similar. The adjudicators watched these shows and made their selections, based on the streamed production.



Above, Pete Ammel as Jerry and Kris Hovland as Jamie. Below are invited dignitaries giving a standing ovation at the private taping.



This show is a deep dive into the thought process of writing an original play to be performed and compete for a virtual theatre festival. (Huh? Sounds sort of familiar!) The play follows Jerry and Jamie as they struggle to decide what play to perform for AACTFest, only to be thwarted by the denial of theatrical performance rights. When the two have exhausted all possible options, Jerry decides to write his own script. What ensues is pure comic genius, even better than fart jokes in a car. As the two characters navigate the process, the audience gets to see the inner workings of Jerry's Brain and the struggles he is having now that he committed to writing an original play in just four weeks.

Players de Noc, like all theatres across the planet were forced to pivot and adapt to a new way of presenting theatre. The thing is, Players de Noc did not just adapt, they thrived with incorporating technology into their production. Whether it was streaming their composer Christopher Powell from Chicago into rehearsal every night, or streaming in their Director J.R. Spaulding Jr. from outside Detroit or even one of their cast members, Mary Jo Denolf, from Grand Rapids. The group incorporated technology into every aspect of the performance. Utilizing seven moving and stationary cameras, five computers, three high powered projectors and three 120" screens on stage, the group embraced the marriage of live and virtual theatre like never before.

You can learn more about *Jerry's Brain* by following Players de Noc on Facebook, visiting their website at playersdenoc.org or register to watch the show during AACTFest at <https://aact.org/aactfest-2021>. *Jerry's Brain* will be streamed through Broadway on Demand during AACTFest on Thursday, June 17, at 10:40pm EST.

Michigan is so proud to be represented in the National AACTfest by Players de Noc. They've been there before and will, no doubt, make us very proud again this year.



National Companies and their productions being presented at Virtual AACT-Fest 2021:

- INNOVAtheatre, Cincinnati, Ohio, *Ordinary Days*, music and lyrics by Adam Gwon
- Stage Left Theater Association, Spokane, Washington, *Lonely Planet*, by Steven Dietz
- Theatre Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, *Love and Cheese Toast*, by Cooper Shattuck
- Artists Collaborative Theatre, Elkhorn City, Kentucky, *Blood Song*, by Chelsea Marcantel
- SHAPE Players, Mons, Belgium, *Holy Days*, by Sally Nemeth
- Players de Noc, Escanaba, Michigan, *Jerry's Brain*, by J.R. Spalding
- Windham Actors Guild, Windham, New Hampshire, *How to be a Good Son*, by Julia Cho
- The Studio Theatre, Little Rock, Arkansas, *Hillary and Clinton*, by Lucas Hnath
- Shawnee Little Theatre, Shawnee Oklahoma, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, by Lucas Hnath
- City Theatre, Pelham Alabama, *Collected Stories*, by Donald Margulies
- Bellingham Theatre Guild, Bellingham, Washington, *The Harry and Sam Dialogues*, by Karen Ellison
- The Lexington Players, Lexington, Massachusetts, *The Mountaintop*, by Katori Hall

See article about our Players de Noc, Escanaba, on page 3.

CTAM looking for the best of the best!

Do you know someone who is deserving of special recognition?

This past year, theatre certainly has looked quite different from previous years. Many affiliate member groups have had to close their doors, reduce volunteer opportunities and resort to the virtual media to keep their name out there during the shut-down. But we know there are individuals who have worked tirelessly to keep things afloat, and we want to hear from you.

CTAM wants to help you honor your incredibly special volunteers and are currently accepting nominations for the following awards:

ROBERT A. McKENNA AWARD

CTAM's most prestigious award was established in 1987 to honor Robert A McKenna – a long-time CTAM friend, supporter, and actor in Michigan – who epitomized the spirit of community theatre. The McKenna is given annually at our Fall Conference to a living person who exhibits, through action, commitment, and dedication, his or her support of community theatre on the state and local levels.

THE DOROTHY ARNETT VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

The Dorothy Arnett Volunteer Service Award is presented by CTAM to individuals who have given valuable, long-term service to their local theatre group. Each year any CTAM affiliate member group can recommend an individual or couple who has given valuable and significant service to their local group for at least ten years. CTAM will consider all valid nominations and can grant up to six such awards per year.

Please visit our website for more information about the nomination process. The deadline to nominate someone for a 2021 award is September 1, 2021. As a reminder, current sitting CTAM board members are not eligible for either award.



If you have any questions, please contact our Awards Chair Michael J. Wisniewski at mwisn62@gmail.com.



Here come da judge! . . . seven of them, in fact!

Seven judges have received the ten plays submitted to the 2021 CTAM Playwriting Contest. They now have the monumental task of reading and critiquing these plays.

The judges will be looking for:

- ✓ The feasibility of mounting the play.
- ✓ Dramatic essentials – protagonist, antagonist, conflict, resolution.
- ✓ Clearly defined mood and genre.
- ✓ Fully developed characters the audience will care about.
- ✓ Believable dialogue that suits the characters.
- ✓ A plot to hold an audience's attention.

The winning plays will be announced at the 2021 CTAM Fall Conference and the winning entries will be royalty-free to member groups for the next two seasons.

THANKS, Dave and Brad!

Dave Durham (*Of Divine Interest*) and Brad Bowman (*Blood Brothers*), 2020's contest winners, have both agreed to extend the royalty-free performance time for another season due to all our Covid

shut-downs. Your troupe may perform either play in your 2021 or 2022 season royalty-free.

Note: Contact information for them is available on the CTAM website: ctam.online/playwriting-contest-winners/ and Dave's self-published script is available on Amazon.

Something in the water?

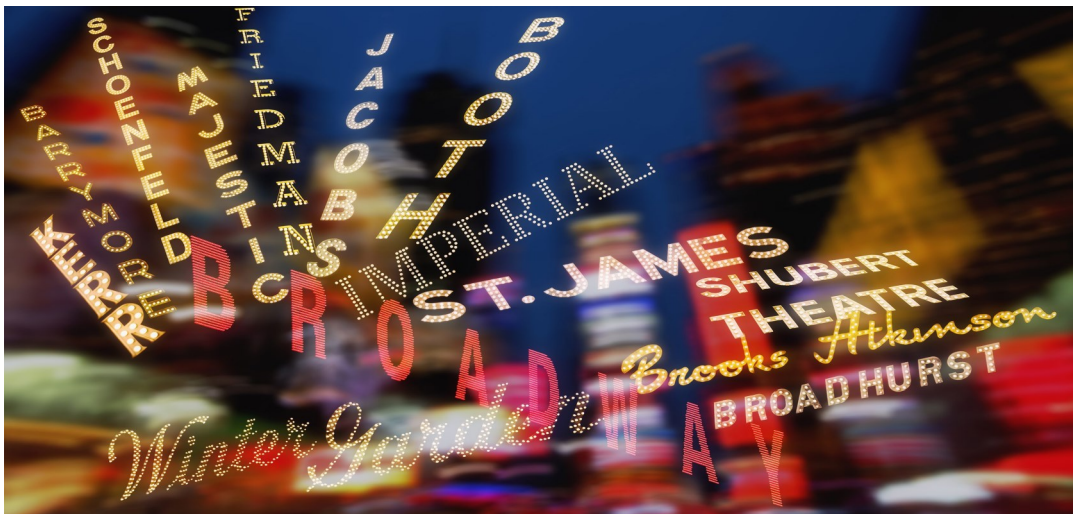
Rosedale Community Players have acknowledged three playwrights for this year's contest. How about your group? Any potential writers? The 2022 contest will begin on January 1, 2022.

'Almost free' playwriting workshops offered this summer!

If you are thinking of trying playwriting, Grosse Pointe Theatre is offering a series of four monthly virtual workshops this summer, leading up to entering your play in their annual ten-minute playwriting contest and festival. The workshops are 90 minutes on Saturday mornings (July 10, August 14, September 11 and October 9); deadline for submission of play is December 31, 2021, and the Festival and performance will be next May 2022. Non-GPT-member cost for the series of four workshops is only \$25; members are free. There will be writing assignments to be accomplished between sessions!

You do not have to enter the competition, nor do you have to take the workshops to enter! You are welcome to do as much or as little as you wish!

Please check the GPT website at gpt.org for all the details, to be posted June 1.



Don't Panic!

*Monthly musings by
Chuck Goddeeris*



So, you took last month's advice and developed and workshopped your script to death and finally feel like it's as close to a final draft as you want. So, now what?

You have essentially two options: getting an agent and/or publishing house to sell your script or self-publishing. Both routes can be daunting but highly rewarding. If you can't get in with an agent there are independent publishers out there to help you manage your scripts. One independent publisher you may want to look at is Brooklyn Publishers (<https://www.brookpub.com/>). They specialize in family friendly or clean shows but also support the 10-minute and one-act genres.

However, if you want to control your own destiny you can go the self-publishing route. A surprisingly quick and simple way to do it is via Amazon (<https://kdp.amazon.com/>). A good friend of mine was able to get theirs online in less than a month from start to finish. You could sell a typical paperback-sized script and/or a kindle version (for separate prices). I would at least recommend the paperback route as this simplifies having theatre companies trying to print their own via a Kinkos or local copy center.

The other big challenge with self-publishing is ensuring you protect yourself legally with performance rights. Its best to work with a lawyer to help create a boilerplate agreement that will cover all of your scripts, regardless of who produces them. Hopefully you know someone who is a lawyer or good with contracts, if not, then don't hesitate to ask your home/community theatre if they might know someone who can help you with this aspect.

Once you've got that process nailed down, you should definitely create a website. This is extremely useful if you are doing the independent/

self-published type route. It's your brand, it's your story, and can help you get lots of information about you and your plays to your potential producers/theatres/etc.

You'd be amazed at how easy it is to make a website these days. Sites like Wix and Squarespace make it relatively painless to put together a portfolio style site. This will require some time and effort up front, but once you've got the site created its extremely easy to maintain and helps you stand out from the rest of the crowd.

I can't tell you the number of emails I get from aspiring playwrights who send lengthy emails to my theatre – it's a bunch of text that I don't really want to read, it's boring. Take some time to build a site that sells me on you and your works as a playwright. Trust me, it's a much more useful spend of time for both parties.

Lastly, I want to suggest some tips on play summaries and soliciting theatres to produce your scripts. Most importantly, have your play proof-read and free of silly little typos and grammatical errors. Nothing will turn off a potential producer faster than missed mistakes. Secondly, have a couple of friends read your play and have them write a 1-3 paragraph summary to compare to your own. The summary is your elevator pitch so it should be accurate and honest. Finally, if you send a full copy of your script, please make sure you are crystal clear on how they obtain rights to perform it (either in a page at the start of the script or your email or letter to the theatre).



Above all else, be friendly, honest and authentic if you are reaching out to theatres to get them to produce your play.

Theatres want to see your show succeed as much as you do. If you've written a great script and gotten your foot in the door, then ninety percent of the hard work is done. The last ten percent is usually logistics and scheduling. If they like your script, they will let you know, heck they will probably want more scripts from you. Be yourself, don't panic and put yourself out there. Actors do it with auditions and you can do it too!



The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Both of the shows I am scooping this month have a simple, very portable set and a cast that can be small or large. Here's hoping that somehow, some way community theatre can go live this summer. I saw *Pippin* in Florida with a 50% capacity and totally masked cast and audience. Waiting for the curtain, the anticipation and excitement felt like my first Broadway show: *Chorus Line!*

Bethel Park Falls by Jason Pizzarello is published by Playscripts. With a very simple set: a park bench, this 80–90-minute play has 15 roles which can be played by 5-17 actors. In the nine short scenes, random couples meet at Bethel Park, which will soon to be destroyed due to rezoning. During the interactions of these 15 individuals, two people, sometimes strangers, connect in a tiny microcosm of humanity. The characters are rich and relatable without being stereotypes. There are a father and son, twin brothers, teacher and student, two struggling parents, a jogger and a wanna-be jogger, a homeless person and a “lost” veteran heading home.

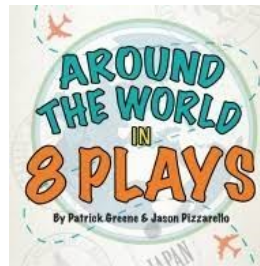


Each interlude/season is introduced by a retired park ranger who rakes leaves, shovels snow, and plants flower while reciting a few lines from Charles Dickens, Emily Bronte, Robert Frost, George Eliot and T.S. Elliot. Props are brought on by the actors, letting the play move seamlessly from one scene to another. As the play progresses, we see connections between the characters in different scenes. We meet the student that the teacher found cheating, the homeless man whose twin brother has been looking for him, the soldier whose wife is longing for him, the two joggers who meet after weeks of watching each other. The play begins and ends with

a blind bird watcher and a stressed business woman. Happily, the Park, which was facing imminent closure has been turned into a nature preserve.

Besides normal park noises like children playing, sound is a “symphony of birds chirping”, plus the specific songs of several species. Special props: a baby carriage, a red wagon, a broken guitar, a Kuwaiti dollar, a smashed cellphone, snow, and leaves.

This is a heart-warming play about the rejuvenating effect of nature with many poignant moments, truly funny dialogue and sometimes surprising dynamics between characters. I LOVE this script! Ages 13+



Playscripts' **Around the World in 8 Plays** by Patrick Greene and Jason Pizzarello ©2009 consists of eight skits, running 75-90 minutes with permission to cut as much as needed. Cast is a minimum of three women and three men, with

room for expansion. This is an ideal outdoor show as it features a traveling troupe of storytellers. Needed for set up: a small free standing flat, a banner and a trunk with *all* the players' props and costumes, which are minimal. Pantomime does most of the work telling these stories. The “emcees” are Bernardo and Isabella who introduce the stories and choose each skit's narrators. Typical “storyteller” costumes could be used but this is *wide* open. For mythical beings like a dragon, a giant centipede, a half man, the authors suggest masks, sock puppets, etc. Here's an example of the simplicity and creativity of these over-the-top stories: the “Tree Rooter” monster uses toothpicks, and the “Mountain Tosser” uses pebbles. The dialogue between the stories and the interactions with the audience makes this street show a winner. The very old stories are from many countries and told with humor throughout. No tech, but a props *team* will be necessary and they will work overtime. An intermission provides an opportunity to pass the hat. A little adult humor but suitable for all ages.