



May 2021

CALLBOARD

CTAM 2021 Spring Conference: May 17-21

REACHING YOUR BEST

Spring traditionally brings new thoughts and new ways of doing things. In spite of all the changes going on in our personal lives and in the lives of our theatre groups, there is a certain comfort in knowing that basic life goes on: Leaves turn green, chicks are born, and life is renewed again.

Spring is the perfect time to learn new skills, expand your toolbox by adding something new, and restore your knowledge of the theater arts. Because we have all had an unintended break in our busy lives, now is the time to pull our head out of the sand and make improvements for the exciting theater happenings just over the horizon. CTAM is happy to present our virtual 2021 Spring Conference: **Reaching Your Best**.

May 17 through May 21, 2021

7:00 p.m. each evening

(Cocktail hour begins at 6:30 for meeting friends, etc.)

Using Zoom technology, we will present exciting workshops, per the list below, for a recommended donation of \$5 per workshop. (If you are interested in all 5 offerings, the 5th course is on us!) The

workshops, presented by outstanding experts in the field, will be one-hour long, plus additional time allowed for Q&A, if needed.



Check out the [CTAM website](#) and your Facebook for current list of instructors, bios, dates and times of the workshops.

If you want to attend any of the workshops offered during this special Spring Conference week, go to <http://ctam.online/sc2021/> and register for the specific workshops you are interested in. Just prior to the workshop, you will receive the access code for that workshop.

This is a great and unique opportunity for Michiganders (and others across the land, of course) to see what CTAM is doing and to access the workshops at our Spring Conference.

Area of interest		Workshop topic to be addressed
Administration	Monday 5/17	Introducing diversity and inclusiveness to your group
Acting	Tuesday 5/18	Presenting your best self at auditions
Directors	Wednesday 5/19	Prepping for your auditions (virtual and in-person)
Technical theatre	Thursday 5/20	Exploring new multi-media techniques for your set
Youth theatre	Friday 5/21	Introducing kids to technical side of theatre

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.



The Finish Line's In Sight!

There's still time to put the finishing touches on your brilliant play and email it to the [Playwriting Committee](#) by May 15th. The rewards are great – cash prizes for the winners and helpful critiques from our panel of judges for everyone. The field of entries is surprisingly small this year, so the odds are in your favor – get 'er in!

Entering the CTAM contest is a great introduction to the field of playwriting contests. We are all friendly and want you to win, so the comments offered by the judges can only help you with future efforts.

The winners are determined prior to the Fall Conference (late September this year). Awards are announced at the annual gathering of CTAM, virtual again this year!

Contest rules and helpful hints are on the CTAM Website (<http://ctam.online/playwriting-contest/>)

CTAM Calendar of Events

Wed., May 5 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
Saturday, May 15	Playwriting Contest entry deadline
May 17-21, 2021	CTAM Virtual Spring Conference
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



Reopening audience numbers clarified

Recently, a long-time follower of the Callboard and CTAM asked for some help as their group prepares for returning to the theatrical world and lays some plans for a summer show. Because they had gotten different answers from their local health department, their specific questions of CTAM were as follows:

- ✓ Is the body count for in-person theatre still limited to 25%?
- ✓ Is the percentage of seats able to be sold reduced by the number of cast and crew working the show? For example: If 25% of seats is 50 but there are 12 people in cast and crew can you sell all 50 seats or only 28 seats?
- ✓ Has the social distance for theatre venues been reduced to three feet? Or is it still at six feet?

Chuck Goddeeris, CTAM webmaster, Callboard columnist and member of Rosedale Players, offered that we are all covered by the “entertainment/live venue” rules on the michigan.gov/coronavirus site.

- ◇ Indoor Facilities must not exceed 50% of the limits established by the fire marshal and must not exceed an overall total of 300 people.
- ◇ Outdoor Facilities must not exceed 50% of the limits established by the fire marshal (if applicable), and must not exceed an overall total of 1000 people.

***Gatherings are permitted at the following entertainment facilities and recreational facilities, auditoriums, arenas, cinemas, concert halls, performance venues, sporting venues, stadiums, theaters, archery ranges, amusement parks, arcades, bingo halls, bowling alleys, gun ranges, laser tag, and trampoline parks.*

Chuck pointed out that cast and crew numbers should factor into your total body count

meeting the 50% capacities above and that social distancing rules of six feet still apply. "Households" can still be in individual groups but should be distanced six feet from other unique groups or individuals.

To echo what Chuck already mentioned, Jamie Peterson from Players de Noc in Escanaba reiterated that most indoor facilities are at 50% capacity as dictated by the fire marshal or local code. That 50% represents everyone in the building.

As you can see the outdoor spaces are different as far as capacity requirements because they're based on the overall capacity of the outdoor arena or area you are performing in. What is true in all situations is there has to be a six-foot separation in people from different households or outside of their normal "Pod".



In the link under the Health Department's website, it details that people that travel to an event in the same vehicle can be together, people that operate within the exact same social circles

can be together, and people that are from the same households can all sit together. But there does have to be a six-foot gap between that group of people and the next group of people, regardless if it's inside a theater or at an outside event.

“Now here's the kicker!” Jamie explained. “These are the state-established guidelines, but your county could enforce a stricter version of these guidelines. I reached out to our local county health department for guidance on these same

(continued from page 3)

questions just a few days ago. They clearly explained to me that there are areas of Michigan that are under more strict guidelines than just the state established guidelines. Some county health departments have determined that they have to be on a tighter requirement. So, you may be getting different information from different people, depending on what county they're in.

"That was the first time I had heard it explained in that way. The example that our health department gave me was that a number of college communities -- and bedroom communities just outside of college communities that are experi-



encing higher infection rates -- have actually gone to stricter Covid guidelines in those areas." So just because you're following the state guidelines might mean you're actually breaking local guidelines. Always check with your local health authority before selling tickets or planning your event.

April's Roundtable hits the mark!

If you missed the April 22nd Roundtable with New York production designer Richard Hoover, you missed a great presentation! Richard has a list of feature films and stage productions as long as your arm and examples of his productions are sprinkled liberally throughout his presentation. What a great resource for beginning and experienced designers alike.



Richard Hoover

In addition to being an award-winning designer, Richard started out as an actor and still maintains his dual involvement from his Covid-mandated studio in New York.

April's webinar with Richard Hoover is viewable on our YouTube page at <https://youtu.be/pPCbiznB3mc>

Thanks to Rhonda Lehan and the other members of the Education Committee for lining up such an excellent and well-qualified webinar.

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 complete article on AACTfest on the next page, please. Page 5.



Players de Noc to participate in national AACTfest

Players de Noc (Escanaba) has been selected to present its production of *Jerry's Brain*, by J.R. Spaulding, Jr., score by Christopher Powell, at Virtual AACT-Fest 2021, the National Community Theatre Festival, June 14 – 20, 2021 - aact.org/21

Virtual AACTFest 2021 will feature 12 community theatre productions from across the United States and the U.S. Military Services, which will be streamed during the week of the festival. *Jerry's Brain* is scheduled to be broadcast Thursday, June 17, 10:40pm.

Virtual AACTFest 2021 will celebrate theatre's resiliency, representing the best of community theatre in America. In addition to the 12 productions, keynotes, workshops, educational programming, vendor exhibits, a design competition, and special events will focus on supporting theatres through this evolutionary journey.

A professional video production company, Colvin Theatrical, will shoot each show on four professional Blackmagic cinema cameras, with a mixture of close-ups, wide angles and moving shots. Using live-editing and broadcast technology, each performance video will emulate the theatrical experience each finalist would have at an in-person AACTFest, while maintaining professional, high-quality cinematic standards.

Jerry's Brain reveals Jerry and Jamie, who have spent months attempting to select the best play for a theatre competition, only to be thwarted by licensing permissions. An original script seems to be the only answer. Jerry struggles with his own brain, his ego, his id, and a global pandemic to create an original script to present at AACTFest, the national theatre festival. Can it be created in time for the competition? .



AACTFest is a celebration of theatre and a learning experience for those who take part. Each National Company production will receive an online adjudication from experienced and nationally known adjudicators. Their comments on productions will be a learning experience for all participating company members and audience members. (NOTE: See page 5 for a list of the participating companies in the competition.)

Registration and performance tickets are available to all. More information is available at aact.org/21.

AACT provides networking, resources, and support for America's theatres. AACT represents the interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Military Services overseas.

CTAM congratulates Players de Noc on this honor and we're all thrilled to be represented by such magnificent actors!



It seems to me...

By Dexter Brigham



THOUGHTS ON THE SCOTT RUDIN CONTROVERSY

Over the past few weeks, Broadway has had a reckoning of sorts. Mega-producer Scott Rudin, whose long list of hits include the new Aaron Sorkin adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Book of Mormon*, as well as the upcoming Hugh Jackman and Sutton Foster led *The Music Man*, has stepped away from his productions. In the last few days, he also resigned from the Broadway League, and there is a demonstration planned to pressure theatres to stop working with him.

Scott Rudin has a reputation as tempestuous, volatile personality who has engaged in many instances of physical and verbal violence against his employees. He is a rich, white guy with a huge network of investors which gives him the power to get projects off the ground that would be laughed out of the pitch meeting coming from someone else. It took the powerful gesture of Karen Olivo, the Tony Award-winning star of *Moulin Rouge*, who resigned from the show as a way to bring attention to Rudin's abusive behavior, to convince the industry to hold Rudin accountable for his actions.

This got me thinking about the cliches we hold in our mind about the Broadway world: the cruel audition, the sleazy producer, arbitrary firings, body-shaming. I've fought against those cliches for years, assuring actors in my shows that those stories are just myths, exaggerated anecdotes from a bygone era. But are they?

To be sure, my experience is biased. During my career as a musical theatre performer (a bunch of regional, two national tours and an Off-Broadway show) I was, for the most part, treated and paid well. But I was also a cis, straight, white guy. When I talk to my wife about her ex-

periences as a woman, the narrative begins to change: women are consistently paid less than men because of the gender imbalance; women's bodies are treated like a commodity to be weighed, criticized and monetized. When I speak with friends who are artists of color, it gets even worse: tokenism, segregated seasons, and complete exclusion from positions of authority.

All things flow from Broadway down to regional and community theatres. We are a reflection of the Great White Way. And, friends, it's time to admit that our beloved theatre has serious problems. Ostracizing Scott Rudin, though necessary, will not cure the illness. Unconscious bias training, though necessary, will not solve the problem.

In my work as a producer, I hold myself to four truths that I try to live out each day with my artists and staff:

- ◆ Theatre is art, and good art is impossible unless the creators are given an environment where their creative impulses are supported and nurtured.
- ◆ Theatre is also a business, and the employees of a business will not be productive unless they feel that they are respected and that their work has meaning.
- ◆ All actors are artists, from the first-timer in the ensemble of our local community theatre to the brightest Broadway star. They should be treated as artists and be allowed to fully embrace where they are on their journey.
- ◆ Diversity, in all its many forms, makes us better humans and better storytellers.

Only when these things become universally accepted will the American theatre really start to get things right again.



Money Matters

with your CTAM Treasurer

Jamie Peterson

It has been a long 14 months since the pandemic forced so many of us to halt productions, cancel seasons or move to virtual and outdoor performances. It has also been a long time since many theatre groups have been able to create a steady flow of income to secure the continuation of their seasons and programming. Many groups still have leases, insurance, staff and other expenses to pay while having nowhere near the income sources we once had.

While theatre is almost always the first thought on my mind, it may not always be to our patrons and our communities where we reside. The majority of your community may think that you are simply dormant and have no need for their financial support through this extremely difficult time. Without your normal presence or fundraising efforts, few people may know how they can help support and see our amazing theatre groups through this challenging time. Your theatre may operate mainly on the revenue from ticket sales, or you may hold local fundraising events and

possibly a combination of both. Whatever your past sources of income were, it is best to look to new ideas and proven successes from your fellow brothers and sisters in community theatre.

In Michigan we are facing another possible delay in our return to the stage as we see Covid cases soaring. We are also facing the possibility of extra cautious patrons who may delay their return to our productions, and the 170% increase in building materials since this time last year. All of these factors and more, make it so imperative that we do our best to seek and acquire new revenue streams to ensure our future.



Jamie Peterson

The single most important thing to know through all of this is, You Are Not Alone! CTAM is here to support and assist you in any way that we are able. Many of our committee and board members have participated or explored successful fundraising alternatives to supply theatres with the needed funding to weather this storm. In addition to CTAM, there are members in your own organization that are willing to help and work to make these efforts a reality. Quite often theatre groups are not always transparent with their own finances until it reaches a critical level. I encourage all groups to be very transparent with the resources you have and the resources you wish to pursue. You will be amazed at what a Call to Action that can be for your members. You can also contact us at ctamthrives@gmail.com to help in your efforts.

I would never claim to have all the answers for your organization, but I do know that we are more successful together and CTAM can help your organization become stronger and more capable to handle anything this pandemic can throw at you.

Because transparency is important on all sides, below you will see a snapshot of CTAM's own operating resources from 2019 right up through today. CTAM has taken some very aggressive and collaborative steps to continue to reach all of our affiliate theatres through new online virtual webinars and roundtables. We will continue to strive to provide informative content that allows you and your theatre group to grow and succeed. Visit [CTAM.online](https://ctam.org) for upcoming educational opportunities and follow us on Facebook.

CTAM resource snapshot:

April 1st 2019 operating fund balance was \$12,126.00, April 1st 2020 operating fund balance \$11,058.00 and April 1st 2021 operating fund balance is \$11,652.00. CTAM has and will continue to seek fiscally responsible ways to educate and bring theaters together across the state of Michigan.



Don't Panic!

*Monthly musings by
Chuck Goddeeris*



So, you've spent a year in hiding doing your Stephen King impersonation and written your first script and want to know what to do now, right? Well, you've come to the right place.

First, find a friend or two to proofread it. You want to make sure it reads smoothly, as you intended it, and that there are no glaring typos that aren't there intentionally (as part of a dialect or characterization) before you start shopping it around for production.

At the bare minimum, your script is 90% dialogue and 10% stage directions (with a title page). You don't need a character sheet, a costume plot, a properties list, a stage diagram, etc. Those are bells and whistles that aren't entirely necessary with possibly one exception – the properties list, as long as it minimally describes the props needed. Costume plots often get too involved in detail and again limit the creativity of the technical team to design something that fits their production's vision. And please don't get me started on character sheets/guides – just provide a gender breakdown and if double-casting is possible for multiple roles. Less is more in these cases.

Next, if this is truly your first script you wrote and you are any sort of control freak, it will be very hard to give up control (aka direction) of your new baby. This is not uncommon, and I don't mind that when you submit it around town you will want to stay with it and direct the piece – that's fairly normal. I just want to challenge your mindset/approach in saying that an experienced or talented director can help you pull even more out of the words on the pages and help show you potential tweaks/edits for your script, if you so choose.

Overall, you are basically going down one of two paths after you have a completed script: submitting your script to potential festivals and theatres wherever you can find them (not just locally) or working with your home theatre or one close to you

to get your show on the stage. I'm all for both options, especially if you want your babies to go off on their own and make you some fame and fortune. At some point you will have to let your babies grow on their own.

If you can't quite do that yet, then I greatly implore you to connect with the community theatres you work with most closely to gauge their interest in helping you out. You'd be surprised how willing they might be. Many also have playwriting groups within their organization who can help you get a group together to stage read your show and make sure it presents as you want. Not only that, but many of these groups meet regularly and help you improve your skills, give you writing prompts/ideas, and provide you numerous festivals/contests to check out.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention CTAM's Annual Playwriting Contest. Entries are due May 15th every year, so just a few weeks to get your entry in. All we ask is an endorsement from your community theatre and a small fee and you are on your way to statewide fame and prestige. Full details here: <http://ctam.online/playwriting-contest/>

If you still need help finding festivals and contests to submit your scripts to, aside from just reaching out to theatres directly, that requires a bit of googling and good social networking. That's also where your local playwriting group can come in handy. Some of them already have those connections and can point you to those opportunities. If you don't have that "in", then here are a couple sites you should consider getting an account with to help you on your playwriting journey:

<https://playsubmissionshelper.com/>

Helps you find festivals to submit to and is regularly curated. (\$6.99/month)

<https://newplayexchange.org/>

This helps you connect with other playwrights and organizations looking for scripts. (\$10 - \$25/year depending on level). This is a great way to connect with other playwrights if you can't find a local playwriting group.

Finally, if you want to go a step further we will discuss distribution/self-publishing and more advanced steps next month when we once again remind you:

DON'T PANIC!



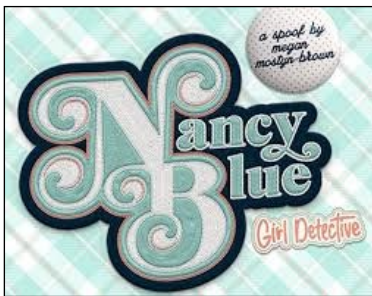
The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



This month, I have featured three radio plays that could use the same set with a few adjustments. Basics are basic: microphone and music stands, “Applause” and “ON AIR” signs and most important, the labor-intensive sound effects table. With one set up your group could rotate three radio plays, perhaps even two a night. Three casts would also spread the work and not the virus.

Playscripts’ *Nancy Blue: Girl Detective* by Megan Mostyn-Brown ©2012 is a 35–45-minute radio play with some props, costumes and set pieces. The dialogue mid-century slang although Nancy uses a cellphone and a computer. With a cast of 14 females and 2 males, this would be a fun middle/high school production. The ages of the characters run from 14-20, although the twenty-year-old cop is teased about looking like he’s twelve. The silly plot: the high school principal is missing. Nancy Blue and crew question colorful stereotypical characters and the crime is solved.



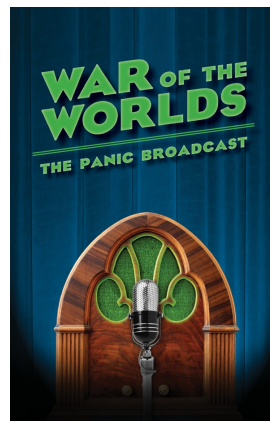
This show has great rhythm. The narrator is backed up by two cheerleaders and the snarky AV Nerd/SFX person. The humor is reminiscent of a 1940 gumshoe novel, needing to be played big and bold. That boldness needs to be performed very seriously for most, but some characters are self-aware, playing to the audience.

Also, from Playscripts, *The 39 Steps* by Joe Landry © 2010 is set at a metropolitan radio station in 1948. A minimum of two women and three men are needed. The plot is very complex so, I am not going to describe it here. (I scooped *The 39 Steps* in the April 2020 Callboard) This radio play would be a simple way to produce this clever, hilarious story with social distancing. Many, many sound effects and a bunch of musical transitions are required. Two delightful advertisement jingles

break up the 40–50-minute show: “North by Northwest Airlines” and one for the “Bates Hotel” in tribute to Alfred Hitchcock’s oeuvre. “In the Bates Hotel, you can wash your cares away?!”

Playscripts’ *The War of the Worlds-Panic Broadcast* (WOW) adapted by Joe Landry is set in 1948. It’s been ten years since the original WOW broadcast when Americans believed Martians had landed in New Jersey. This 1948 version contains the backstory, the original and the aftermath of the 1938 panic. Seventy to 75 minutes long, minimally, three men and one woman can perform the play. The backstory includes a telephone interview with Howard Koch, the writer who adapted H. G. Wells’ 1898 novella.

The broadcast is interrupted by CBS bosses reporting panicked phone calls and mass hysteria. John Houseman, the producer, and Orson Welles, the face of the Mercury Theater, argue about terminating the show. The description of the aftermath is startling. A Princeton University study in late 1938



found that many listeners heard “Germans”, not Martians. A newspaper vs. radio battle ensued, as print journalists state “radio is not to be trusted”. There is Welles’ eloquent defense of the show, the threat of a lawsuit and yet, much praise. As Welles’ brainchild was on shaky financial ground, the resulting uproar landed the Campbell Soup Company as a sponsor. Later, Welles admitted

that his motives were not pure entertainment, but to show how dangerous it was when people believed everything on the radio and now television. Obviously, a problem that will never go away. Caveat: “American Brand’s” commercials suggest guns as an anniversary gift and a bomb shelter. Very tongue-in-cheek, but really!?

In the epilogue, the actors approach the microphones holding period radios with a background of clips from the original show and the ensuing panic. Archival clips from 1941’s bombing of Pearl Harbor, the ‘50s Red Menace, the ‘60s Cuban Missile crisis, and September 11, 2001 end the show.

Goosebumps.