



CALLBOARD

December 2021

CTAM membership growing, finally

We now have 42 affiliate member groups, as we work on rebuilding our membership. The Board of Directors has been working diligently to recruit new (and old!) members who have let their membership lapse. If you know of other groups or are part of another group that would benefit from membership, please contact [CTAM Administrator Mary Jo Denolf](#). She'll do the calling and the follow-up, if you will give us the contact information.

Alpena Civic
Audio Air Force, Lansing
Avon Players, Rochester
Bay City Players
Beckwith Theatre Company, Dowagiac
Center Stage - Kalamazoo
Clarkston Village Players
Clio Cast & Crew
Community Theatre of Howell
Farmington Players
Fenton Village Players
Flint Community Players
Fowlerville Community Theatre
Glen Arbor Players
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre
Grosse Ile Players
Grosse Pointe Theatre
Holland Civic Theatre
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre
Lebowsky Center for Performing Arts, Owosso
Little Traverse Civic Theatre, Petosky
Manistee Civic Theatre
Midland Center for the Arts
Monroe Community Theatre

Muskegon Civic Theatre
Northern Lites Readers Theatre, Cadillac
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City
Pinckney Players
Pit & Balcony Community Theatre, Saginaw
Players de Noc, Escanaba
Players Guild of Dearborn
Pontiac Theatre IV
Port Austin Community Players
Rosedale Community Players. Southfield
Spotlight Players, Plymouth
Stagecrafters, Royal Oak
Tawas Bay Players, East Tawas
The Sauk, Jonesville
Thornapple Community Players, Hastings
Tin Shop Theatre, Buchanan
Twin City Players, St. Joseph
WEPlayers, East Tawas

WE
WISH
YOU
A
MERRY
CHRISTMAS

HELPING COMMUNITY THEATRE *THRIVE* IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1951!



**Community Theatre
Association of Michigan**

2021-22 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 maryloubritton@gmail.com. Updated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Administrator and should be sent to CTAMthrives@gmail.com.



A Dorothy Arnett Volunteer Service Award was presented to Grosse Pointe Theatre's Hon. William J. Giovan (center) for his almost 60 years of membership and service to that group. In addition to acting and singing, Bill was also commended for his years of artistic photographic portraits in costume. Also pictured above are, left, CTAM webmaster Chuck Goddeeris who made the presentation and, right, GPT President Danielle Caralis.

**CTAM is pleased to
announce a new corporate
sponsor, Ludus ticketing!**

Ludus is a Michigan based ticketing software company. In 2019, Ludus sold \$7.1 million in tickets, filling 632,000 seats through its ticketing product.

Ludus will be featured by CTAM for our upcoming January webinar. Please watch our social media posts and emails regarding the date/time for this event.

CTAM Group Affiliates interested in joining Ludus will receive a per-ticket discount by using your CTAM membership code. Join us for more details and a demo of their software in January.

We are delighted to have Ludus on board and helping us provide a better and more simple patron experience for our audiences.



It seems to me...

By Dexter Brigham



America's Shakespeare

"When a person's personality is personable, he shouldn't oughta sit like a lump, It's harder than a matador coercin' a bull, to try to get you off of your rump."

"We could have kept on going, instead we just kept on, We had a good thing going... going... gone."

"Let the moment go. Don't forget it for a moment though. Just remembering you've had an 'and' when you're back to 'or' makes the 'or' mean more than it did before."

When Shakespeare was writing his plays at the end of the 16th century, his contemporaries hadn't the slightest clue that they were breathing the same air as the man who would become an entire genre of theatre unto himself. Was he successful? Sure. Was he considered a great playwright? Of course! But it was impossible in his time to see him for who he was. It was necessary for centuries to pass, for time and successive generations of theatre artists to reveal the extent of his genius, and his contribution to the human experience.

With the passing of Stephen Sondheim, I find myself convinced that the same thing is true of this titan of the American musical. When trying to assess Sondheim's impact on the theatre, it's important to place him in the widest context. The American musical comedy is a theatrical form that is still less than a century old, yet it has taken the world by storm with huge ongoing tours and sit-down performances in all of the major cities around the globe: *Les Mis*, *Wicked*, *Hamilton*, *Frozen*, *Phantom*... the pop culture impact is impossible to measure.

Stephen Sondheim's career began in 1957 when he wrote the lyrics to *West Side Story*, but he grew up with Oscar Hammerstein II as a mentor and father

figure. He is our last connection to the generation of artists who invented the American musical. He saw the dramatic potential of this new form and transformed it from frivolous entertainment into high art that could communicate the depth and complexity of our lives.

I was chatting with a friend about Sondheim's legacy the other day and referred to him as "arguably the most influential Broadway artist of the 20th century," and my friend responded by mentioning Rodgers and Hammerstein, which is a reasonable counterpoint. Rodgers and Hammerstein are synonymous with the genre, having composed the most well-known and beloved works of the genre. But it's worth noting that it's not only Sondheim's body of work that is his legacy, it's the man who created the work, his generosity of spirit across the decades, his willingness to share his insights. He was a pen pal, a mentor, a fan, a cheerleader to hundreds upon hundreds of young Broadway artists.

If social media has shown me anything in the past few days, it's that everyone in the business has their Sondheim story, whether it's an anecdote about meeting him or the song/show/lyric that opened up new doors in their minds about what was possible. His impact is immeasurable. Every show we see on Broadway today is influenced by Stephen Sondheim.



I hope the day comes when *Into the Woods*, *Company*, *Sweeney Todd*, et al, become as visible and treasured by the American public as the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein. I smile when I think of Sondheim becoming a genre unto himself in the coming centuries. Will it happen this year? Probably not. But in his own words...

"Well, maybe next year."



Do you have a good work/life balance?

After attending the AACT National Conference for Managing Directors, this question has gone through my mind several times. If you could change the balance of work and social life, would you make that change?

I did. In March of 2021, I left the best job I ever had as the Director of Volunteers and Operations at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. Was it an easy decision? Absolutely the hardest thing I've ever done. Was it the right decision? Absolutely yes. I was working an average of 60 hours a week, and when I was home I was still thinking about the theatre, the volunteers, the patrons. My mental health was not good and the aches and pains of stress (and theatre politics) were getting to be too much. And yet, I still miss that place everyday.

The point I'm trying to make is how do you make "positive" choices as you move forward with your personal life along with your theatre life. Not everyone will have the same story or situation, but now is the time to take a look and see what could be done differently.

What could you assign to someone else at the theatre? Maybe bring in new volunteers? Maybe stop doing something the same way it's been done forever and modify it so it can be done simpler and more effectively. And some things....do you really need to be doing them at all?

Maybe it's time to change.

I was surprised and also not surprised at the feedback of the attendees at the conference:

- ◆ 6% stated they had no balance and no control.
- ◆ 46% stated they had poor balance but resolved to make it better.
- ◆ 34% have okay balance currently.
- ◆ 15% have achieved good work/life balance.

Have I achieved balance? I think so. It's a challenge everyday to remind myself to take care of me first. I challenge each of you to take a step back and see how you can balance your life better.



Mary Jo Denolf
CTAM Administrator



Are youth programs worth the effort?

YES!

A young, shy 9 year old boy in a new school has a teacher tell him that she (Jessica McClung) needs him. What's a boy to do but answer her call. What was needed were boys for a youth production of *Honk Jr.* by the Owosso Community Players (now Lebowsky Center for Performing Arts). That was all it took, young Matthew Gerding (pictured above) was hooked.

From there this young man was in many more community plays on stage, running lights or as stage manager. He was also in his high school drama club all four years and was involved in every production. This continued to his college education at Central Michigan University where he graduated with a degree in technical theater.

Today Matthew is putting his education and training to use aboard the Norwegian Cruise ship, Bliss, where he is the Production Stage Manager of the Bliss Theater, running the shows *Six* and *Jersey Boys*. When asked what Matthew likes about his job, he says "The director has the creative liberties and takes the show to a certain point but when the lights go on and the curtain comes up, it's my show. It's all on me to get it right and — with live theater — anything can happen."



Breaking Down the Binaryism of Theatre: Utilizing Pronouns

“Hello, my name is Marcus Chapman, and my pronouns are they/them.”

Theatre is dominated by speculation regarding appearance, assigned sex, and body type. We hear the words “he/she/they *look* the part” constantly. We use phrases like “male and female ensemble” and “best actress/actor.” Our entire industry is divided and defined by gender. However, that topic is a hefty one, so this article will only focus on the concept of pronouns.

Now, I am to preface this article with two things. First, vocabulary, here are a few words everyone, but theatre people especially, should know: “cisgender,” this means you identify with the sex assigned to you at birth; “transgender,” this means you do not identify with the sex assigned to you at birth; and “non-binary” or “agender,” this means that you do not fit either man or woman and identify outside of those. That is the most basic breakdown of gender. If you’d like to explore more identities and definitions, here is a valuable resource: <https://etal.media/news/how-to-queer-a-breakdown-of-gender-terms-for-beginners/>

Second, everything I suggest, like all diversification and progressive action, needs to be enforced voluntarily. You cannot force change onto people. Doing so can harbor resentment towards and even damage those you’re trying to help. Change must be prompted by education, time, and open minds. Now, onto the subject at hand, the bare minimum

way to assist in creating a self space for members of the trans community is suggesting pronouns be used regularly in programming and everyday functions. This practice can be as simple as putting them in your email signature and next to names in the playbill. However, it cannot be a requirement.

Forcing people to list pronouns can put closeted trans folks in an uncomfortable position of either outing themselves or putting down pronouns that don’t truly represent them. This also comes with knowing when and how to avoid potentially outing someone. This especially applies when you’re working with young people. I recently directed a concert where one of my actors was non-binary but not out to their parents. They opted to leave off their pronouns. However, that meant that they were the only person in the playbill without pronouns, which could draw attention. So we decided that the entire cast was okay with not listing their pronouns and simply using them correctly in their bios.

In addition to pronouns, removing gendered language is a simple way to show alliance. For example, the phrase “Ladies and Gentlemen” is outdated and has slowly been replaced with more vague options like “Distinguished guests” and “Valued patrons.” And in formatting a show’s playbill, don’t separate the ensemble into male and female, instead say “ensemble.” This has been a feminist and LGBTQ+ argument for many years.

Outside of programming, theatres need to practice what they preach. It starts at the top. Administrators and directors need to do a lot of inward reflection and analysis before they tackle this subject. Once that work begins, they can implement institutional change.

It will take time. A shortlist of personal advice: don’t assume anything about anyone, remain patient with yourself and other people, never get defensive when someone corrects their or someone else’s pronouns to you, and care about it when they do. It makes sense that a lot of cispeople, particularly older cispeople, don’t think about pronouns on an everyday basis. However, there’s a good chance you understand the concept of hurting someone. You don’t need to understand them, but you do need to respect them.



What's playing in Michigan over the holidays?

Bay City Players	<i>Cole in your Stocking</i>	Dec 2-4, 2021
The Sauk, Jonesville	<i>Anne of Green Gables</i>	Dec 2-12, 2021
Center Stage Theatre, Midland	<i>She Loves Me</i>	Dec 3-12, 2021
Lebowsky Center, Owosso	<i>Holiday at Lebowski</i>	Dec 3-12, 2021
Pit & Balcony, Saginaw	<i>Elf, the Musical</i>	Dec 3-12, 2021
Players Guild of Dearborn	<i>Music Revue</i>	Dec 3-12, 2021
Twin City Players, St. Joseph	<i>Elf, the Musical</i>	Dec 3-19, 2021
Players de Noc, Escanaba	<i>Talley's Folly</i>	Dec 3-11, 2021
Glen Arbor Players	<i>Enchanted April</i>	Dec 9-11, 2021
Northern Lites Readers Theatre, Cadillac	<i>A Christmas Melodrama & More</i>	Dec 11-12, 2021
Bay City Players	<i>A Tuna Christmas</i>	Dec 10-19, 2021
Community Theatre of Howell	<i>Elf, the Musical</i>	Dec 10-19, 2021
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>It's a Wonderful Life, the Radio Show</i>	Dec 10-19, 2021
Tawas Bay Players	<i>Christmas Songs & Stories (Free Concert)</i>	Dec 12, 2021
Clarkston Village Players	<i>Murder at Howard Johnsons</i>	Jan 7-22, 2022
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City	<i>Disney's Frozen Jr. *</i>	Jan 14-23, 2022
Grand Rapids Civic	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>	Jan 21-Feb 6, 2022
Stagecrafters, Royal Oak	<i>9 to 5</i>	Jan 28-Feb 20, 2022
Holland Community Theatre	<i>Agnes of God</i>	Feb 3-19, 2022
Avon Players, Rochester	<i>Little Shop of Horrors</i>	Feb 4-19, 2022
Bay City Players	<i>One Slight Hitch</i>	Feb 4-13, 2022
Pit & Balcony, Saginaw	<i>Guess Who's Coming to Dinner</i>	Feb 4-13, 2022
Farmington Players	<i>Tokens of Affection</i>	Feb 11-26, 2022
Northern Lites Readers Theatre, Cadillac	<i>Love Letters</i>	Feb 12-13, 2021
Master Arts Theatre, Grand Rapids	<i>Guess Who's Coming to Dinner</i>	Feb 17-Mar 5, 2022
Old Town Playhouse, Traverse City	<i>R&H Cinderella</i>	Feb 17-Mar 19, 2022
Bay City Players	<i>The Exonerated</i>	Feb 18-19, 2022
Clio Cast and Crew	<i>Absolutely Murder</i>	Feb 18-27, 2022
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Nunsense</i>	Feb 18-27, 2022
Players Guild of Dearborn	<i>The Nerd</i>	Feb 18-27, 2022
Center Stage Theatre, Midland	<i>MLM is for Murder</i>	Feb 25-27, 2022
Lebowsky Center, Owosso	<i>The Sound of Music</i>	Feb 25-March 6, 2022
Grand Rapids Civic	<i>Dragons Love Tacos*</i>	Mar 4-Mar 13, 2022
Twin City Players, St. Joseph	<i>Silent Sky</i>	Mar 4-20, 2022
Bay City Players	<i>Detroit '67</i>	Mar 11-20, 2022
Clarkston Village Players	<i>Deathtrap</i>	Mar 11-26, 2022
Grand Rapids Civic	<i>Ten for All Festival (Ten Minute Plays)</i>	Mar 18-Mar 20, 2022
Stagecrafters, Royal Oak	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream*</i>	Mar 23-Apr 3, 2022
Pit & Balcony, Saginaw	<i>The Greek Mythology Olympiaganza</i>	Mar 25-Apr 3, 2022
Avon Players, Rochester	<i>Run for your Wife</i>	Mar 18-Apr 2, 2022

* indicates youth productions; ** indicates second stage productions, if submitted.

If your information is incorrect or missing, please send the correct information to [The Editor](#) to be corrected or included in the next issue.



The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Below are the three winners from the 2020-21 CTAM playwrighting contest. From the horses' mouths: (apologies to Leo and Pat Paveglio!) "Winning plays may be performed royalty-free for the next two years." Information on all these plays can be found on the CTAM website.

Marypat Allen's two-act play, **Love Among Mortals** is the first-place winner. This two-act comedy depicts the many moods and iterations of modern love in seven very short scenes. Seven scenes, gender specific, ages neutral.

Preparing to Cross has a couple in their sixties preparing for the next chapter.... death. The wife is quite giddy about it, drinking wine, getting comfortable in a coffin.

Hurricane of Love shows a young couple's Zoom call which can be performed live or with screens. He's in Afghanistan and she's desperately missing him.

Eager Beavers deals with unwarranted jealousy. Lots of double entendres as a suspected "homewrecker" talks home security. The jealous husband calls the home security worker, an eager beaver, thus the title. Lots of beaver jokes!

Like Jason is set in a park where Jason's mother, Nancy, confronts his ex-girlfriend, Taylor. Jason is a paranoid schizophrenic; Taylor has moved on. Nancy insists on seeing photos of Taylor's kids, then insists her son is Jason's son.....and scene.

Taming the Lion is the funniest and most absurd. Miss Smith, a therapist, is treating Mr. Jones. They are working on taming Jones' inner lion. Jones describes the other animals he has been and is adamant about keeping his inner lion. ROWR! Miss Smith eventually takes him to her boss who "treats" him with a whip and a chair.

Mum's the Word is about dating in a permanent pandemic world. How do you find your mate when you are kept six feet apart, wearing gloves and can

only get close when wearing a N95 mask?

Stuck takes place behind elevator doors. HE is a businessman. SHE is a very Zen yoga practitioner. When the elevator gets stuck between floors, their reactions vary..... a lot!

Back to the Brazen Hussy by Dave Durham is a comedy that deals with mature subjects. Written with Dave's wonderful sense of humor and superior ear for dialogue, this play seeks an audience with an open mind. This two-act show has a cast of 11-18 players with potential double casting, and flashbacks requiring old and young versions of several characters. The play centers on Wesley (50s), who recently lost his partner, Paul. Closing himself off, Wesley's universe is Dex, their 17-year-old son, and Bobbie, Paul's mother (70s). Wesley's sister Sandy (40s) is a righteous, intolerant woman, very much against Wesley getting to know her 17-year-old Amanda. When Sandy allows Amanda to reconnect

with Wesley, Amanda plans a reunion of the close friends Wesley had at The Brazen Hussy, the neighborhood club where Wesley and Paul met. At the party, Wesley realizes that this exuberant group of friends is also his family. This is a story

about owning one's existence, finding a family, forgiveness, and love. And sardonic humor!!!

Art Nemitz's honorable mention, **Three on a Match**, is two one-acts for three men. "Sooper Dooper" is a light farce about two rhinestone cowboys delivering singing telegrams to JJ. The ensuing argument gently pokes fun at current political correctness and sensitivity about discrimination. As JJ is gay, goofy profiling also makes a statement.

Three on a Match takes place in 1987 in the backroom of Riley's Irish bar. The brothers, Mick, early forties, Paddy, thirties, and Declan, early twenties. This one deals with serious issues. As Declan says, "I'm queer, you're (Paddy) a drunk, and he's (Mick) a nutcase." Mick's story of his Vietnam experience and the PTSD he suffers now is very moving. This play is filled with love and humor and gritty, funny dialogue.

