



CTM CALLBOARD

February 2024

Date set for February 20 at 7 pm

February Roundtable will help you get ready for 2025 AACTfest

AACTFest25 is just around the corner.....well, yes, even though it's a year away it's time to start planning for Michigan's AACTfest. AND...Michigan will be the host for the Region 3 Festival as well! Come join this fabulous panel of past Festival participants and ask as many questions as you can. How do you compete? What type of shows do you select? How to cover travel costs? How to bring a set to another city and much, much more.

Attendance at the roundtable is FREE; simply sign up at <https://forms.gle/5MTyv68a3P44Mj5WA>

Tuesday, February 20, at 7pm via Zoom

Presenters for the session are as follows: (See photos on page 5)

Emily Anderson - Midland Center for the Arts

Emily has been involved in AACTfest since 2011 when Midland submitted *Urinetown* and placed in the top three at Nationals. They hosted regionals in 2013, placed in the top four at nationals in 2017 with *Venus in Fur*; Emily was a virtual adjudicator in 2021; and adjudicated the Youth Fest in 2023. Midland has hosted the state and regional festivals several times each.

David Wahr- Monroe Community Players

Monroe Community Players has participated in almost every festival since the late 1990s and has hosted twice. David has been involved as a director, actor and organizer. One of his shows he directed made it to the Regional Festival in 2009.

Emily Diener- Grand Rapids Civic Theatre

Grand Rapids Civic has hosted the State, Regional and National Festivals but never really sent a group to the festival until 2017 when they were the alternate for the Regional Festival and then in 2019 they also went to Regionals. Emily participated in 2019 as an actor and has served on the volunteer committee who is responsible for their participation in this event.

Jamie Peterson - Players de Noc, Escanaba

No stranger to AACTfest Jamie has been involved for many years. A member of Players de Noc for 32 years. During that time they have qualified for Regional Festival four times and National once. Jamie has won State and Regional Scenic Design Awards and National Technical Director. He is also State and Nationally certified as an AACT Adjudicator.

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.*

Meeting your CTAM Board of Directors

We all think we know each other....and yet we are still learning that our CTAM board has such vast backgrounds.

Let's continue with getting to know your CTAM Board members. This month, we feature your CTAM Secretary, Keith Rikli. Keith is a familiar name and face around southeastern Michigan, as he has worked with many groups in the southeast quadrant of our state.

- Thrill seeker Keith turned 18 (several years ago!) by skydiving, learning to Scuba and spending some cash at the casino - all in one weekend!
- Keith is a licensed pilot and started flying at age 13.
- Served on the Michigan Geospatial organizations (*Geospatial*: relating to or denoting data that is associated with a particular location!)
- Keith has worked on shows (on both sides of the curtain) that included water, fire, traps, flying actors and moving vehicles, but not all at the same time.
- Keith flies drones for a living!



Are auditions the worst part of the whole process?

Audition workshops becoming more popular!

Of all things that performers deal with during the lifecycle of a production, the one that is most feared and disliked is the audition. Nobody is a fan of auditioning (at least I know I'm not): you are unsure of what the director is looking for, friends and colleagues might now be "adversaries" for the part you are going for, and it often feels like there is more pressure at an audition than there is during a performance.

One "new" addition to the theater landscape has helped address this dislike - the audition workshop. When I say "Audition Workshop," I am not referring to a lecture on how to pick your next monologue for your portfolio or the best ways to format your acting resume to highlight your skills (though those also have their place); I mean show-specific events where the production team invites potential auditionees to walk through what the show staff are looking for and how best to highlight their skills. These workshops create a wonderful environment where actors may ask questions about the auditions themselves, the production, and the theater group, if it is new to the individual.

Many of the workshops I have attended primarily focused on working through dance portions of the auditions. This can be a great benefit to the actor, more so than other types of workshops in fact, as the dance section of an audition may be difficult to do on your own and may require more questions than might be allowed in a 15 minute teaching section at the actual time of audition.

Not all workshops follow this format however; for example, during an audition workshop for *Singing in the Rain* at Stagecrafters in Royal Oak, the music director had a portion of time to run through the se-

lected music cuts for the audition and indicated potential measures or phrases that would be most likely to trip singers up. While a singing section is not always possible as prep for an audition, this just adds a level of 'ease' to those auditioning. The main goal of workshops like these is that it reiterates something that many auditionees tend to forget - everyone wants you to succeed and give your best possible performance! That is why I believe



the newest trend of audition workshops have really become more commonplace in the last few years.

While this may seem like it would only be advantageous for musical productions, it can also be used successfully for straight shows. This fall I attended a workshop for *The Play That Goes Wrong* for Grosse Pointe Theatre; there they successfully demonstrated these same goals. The director and artistic director spoke at length with the attendees about the audition process, what to expect from the production if cast, and why the monologue selection was chosen. The director even shed light on what the staff would be looking for from the auditionees in their recitation of the monologue.

It may be easy to assume that the only potential value is to the auditionee, but you would be wrong; there are benefits for both the production staff and theater group. While they are not always perfect, audition workshops can gauge the level of interest in the upcoming show, and create a small baseline of who could be auditioning. The event can also be a strong marketing tool by the theater group to bring new talent in or those who may have not felt comfortable auditioning previously. The best benefit is that every workshop attendee and potential auditionee is also a new potential member of your organization!

--Keith Rikli



One of the more unique and younger community theatre organizations in Michigan is Audio Air Force (AAF).

The group was founded in 2014 by Dave Downing as part of a class he taught at MSU. However, the idea can be traced back several years before that.

Dave had been doing radio and audio theatre for some time when he heard about a yearly audio theatre workshop in Missouri. “The workshop dealt with all facets of doing audio theater, with the final night being a live broadcast of several plays written specifically for the workshop. This was about two hours of live audio theater, producing at least four separate scripts, with continuity between each segment. We had a live band that performed original music written for each production. It was a great learning experience, bringing together people from around the country, including Canada, UK, and France.”

Around 2012 the workshop seemed to change focus and shift more towards that of a film festival. For Dave, he felt like he was more of a viewer, or listener, of finished productions and he missed the hands-on aspect of creation, collaboration and education. So, he took these ideas back with him to MSU and created a class based on doing audio theatre where the final product would be a live performance instead of an exam.

Some of his students who were also active in other community theatres expressed interest in taking this beyond the class, so in the spring of 2014 they started organizing their ideas into an organization and by August they held their first performance.

Right is Adam's Rib, offered by AAF earlier this season. Looks like a fun way to do the theatre we all love!



Chuck G visits CTAM groups



Downing said of the first show that “the venue was a small community space that held up to 60. We had more than 40 to our first show, which was encouraging. At our second show we more than doubled the attendance.” This has led them to do 5-7 shows per season in the style of audio theatre. Even though the Lansing area is alive and thriving with other community theatres, Dave went on to say that the acceptance and collaboration between theatres is what has helped his group grow from the classroom to the stage.

Dave said “the actors like doing shows with us because our schedule from audition to actual performance is much shorter than a stage play; since it's audio, there is no memorizing lines (you read the script), there are no stage actions (the sound effects crew does all of the necessary sounds to supplement the story), no costumes to worry about, and no makeup. Our actors usually portray more than one character in a performance; since it is audio, all you need do is change your voice.”

He further goes on to say, “doing audio theater has been a kind-of mission of mine to get people to use their imagination. Being such a visual society today, with so much emphasis

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on such things as computer-generated graphics and movies with special effects, the part of our brain for the imagination based on audio cues doesn't get used much. In doing the shows for AAF, at the beginning of each production, we talk to the audience about how to get in touch with that part of their imagination - their 'theater of the mind'. We encourage them to close their eyes during a show for a time and experience their imagination."

Dave has created an open and welcoming group and that is what has attracted numerous regulars, such as Patti Spinner who attended an audition about five years ago. She said, "I had no idea what audio theater was. Fortunately, the other auditioners had experience and coached me through. It wasn't a great audition, but I got a small role, playing a western sheriff of all things. I quickly got hooked."

She further sang his praises saying "Dave Downing is the one who sets the tone, and he's just such a good guy. That shines through and it really shapes how we operate. He loves audio theater, and he wants everyone else to enjoy it, too. That's what we're there for. We all get to celebrate old shows, try out new shows, and play around with voices and sounds. Since it's audio, it doesn't matter what you look like - you can be anyone. You can really play around in a way that's pretty unique in the theater world, and it is just so unbelievably fun."



Above is Superheroes Night, offered by Audio Air Force,

AAF may only be just turning 10, but their audience and membership still continue to grow. Patti attributes this to the fact that "we both celebrate the old shows but encourage new writers, as well. Audio Air Force sponsored the writer who won the CTAM annual playwriting contest this year, and we've been performing those shows. So, we're both connected to the history but also looking forward."

If you want to learn more about them (Dave and the group are always open to chat and share their knowledge and experiences) or even listen to some of their shows you should check out their website: www.audioairforce.com

--Chuck Goddeeris

Roundtable presenters for Tuesday, February 20 at 7:00 p.m.



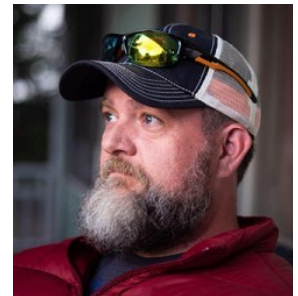
Emily Anderson
Midland Center for the Arts



David Wahr
Monroe Community Players



Emily Diener
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre



Jamie Petersen
Players de Noc, Escanaba



2024 Theatre in Michigan

Feb 1-11, 2024	THE SAUK	<i>Criminal Mischief</i> (AACT New Playfest)
Feb 1-17, 2024	HOLLAND COMMUNITY THEATRE	<i>Noises Off</i>
Feb 2 - 11, 2024	COMMUNITY THEATRE OF HOWELL	<i>Moon Over Buffalo</i>
Feb 9 - 18, 2024	CLIO CAST AND CREW	<i>Hallelujah Girls</i>
Feb 9 - 24, 2024	FARMINGTON PLAYERS	<i>Lend Me a Tenor</i>
Feb 9 - 24, 2024	MUSKEGON CIVIC THEATRE	<i>The Glorious World of Crowns, Kinks</i>
Feb 9 - 25, 2024	STAGECRAFTERS	<i>Romeo & Juliet</i>
Feb 10 - 17, 2024	PINCKNEY PLAYERS	<i>The Vagina Monologues</i>
Feb 16 - 18, 2024	SOUTHGATE COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>The Music Man Jr.</i>
Feb 16 - 24, 2024	LIVONIA COMMUNITY THEATRE	<i>Little Love Stories</i>
Feb 16 - 25, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Is There Life after High School</i>
Feb 16 - 25, 2024	FENTON VILLAGE PLAYERS	<i>Break of Day</i>
Feb 17, 2024	AUDIO AIR FORCE	Audio Air Force Valentine's Special
Feb 16 - March 3, 2024	WE PLAYERS	<i>The Play That Goes Wrong</i>
Feb 22-25, 2024	MIDLAND CENTER FOR THE ARTS	<i>Frozen Jr.</i>
Feb 23-25 & March 1-3, 2024	PORT AUSTIN COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Making God Laugh</i>
February 23-25, March 1-3, 2024	IONIA COMMUNITY THEATRE	<i>She Kills Monsters</i>
Feb 23 - March 3, 2024	OWOSSO COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Anastasia</i>
Feb 23 - March 16, 2024	OLD TOWN PLAYHOUSE	<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>
Feb 23-25, March 1-3, 2024	BAY CITY PLAYERS	<i>The Odd Couple</i>
Feb 29 - March 10, 2024	FLINT COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Hamlet</i>
Mach 1-17, 2024	TWIN CITY PLAYERS	<i>The Red Velvet Cake War</i>
March 1 - 17, 2024	GRAND RAPIDS CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Descendants</i>
March 3 - 23, 2024	MASTER ARTS	<i>Barefoot in the Park</i>
March 7 - 17, 2024	ALPENA CIVIC THEATRE	<i>And Then There Were None</i>
March 8 - 17, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>39 Steps</i>
March 8 - 17, 2024	CENTRAL PARK PLAYERS	<i>Half Baked</i>
March 8-23, 2024	CLARKSTON VILLAGE PLAYERS	<i>The Girl on the Train</i>
March 8 - 23, 2024	AVON PLAYERS	<i>Drinking Alone</i>
March 8-24, 2024	VILLAGE PLAYERS OF BIRMINGHAM	<i>The Cemetery Club</i>
March 8-24, 2024	PLAYERS GUILD OF DEARBORN	<i>Our Town</i>
March 12 - 17, 2024	COMMUNITY THEATRE OF HOWELL	<i>A Year with Frog and Toad</i>
March 15 - 24, 2024	PIT AND BALCONY	<i>The Play That Goes Wrong</i>
March 21 - 24, 2024	THE SAUK	<i>Sauk Shorts</i>
March 29 - April 7, 2024	SOUTHGATE COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>While the Lights Were Out</i>
April 5 - 13, 2024	OLD TOWN PLAYHOUSE	<i>Radium Girls</i>
April 5- 14, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Forever Plaid</i>

If your information is incorrect or missing and you are an affiliate member of CTAM, please send the correct information to CTAMthrives@gmail.com to be included in the next issue.



The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Here's something different. Laura Teasdale wrote *Murder by the Book* ©2023 as a library fundraiser, and it is royalty-free because best-selling mystery author, Louise Penny, sponsoring it. When I saw this in Penny's October newsletter, I was thrilled as these are my passions: libraries and theatre.

In 2006 I started the Tawas City Library Friends and we teamed with the Tawas Bay Players, performing murder mysteries in the library to raise money -- a win-win for both groups.

Teasdale wrote this "murder mystery within a play" to be easily staged in a library. In fact, it is set in a library and acted by library staff. The requisite mansion is created thus: Up center the circulation desk becomes a bar, complete with a whiskey bottle and glasses. Stage left; library chairs are draped to look like a comfy couch. Stage right, a round table is set for tea. Four chairs form a half circle around the table. The only entrance/exit is an "invisible" door up-stage right. Of course, adjust for *your* library, theatre, or other venue.

Eight people play the library staff and the cast; gender, ages, and ethnicity are very fluid. The "murder mystery" cast includes four people at their class reunion, Walter, the butler, and Mrs. P, the high school literature teacher.

The "real" life cast consists of a library patron, the custodian, the children's librarian, a lawyer who takes classes at the library, the playwright, and a wealthy patron/wannabe actor who will draw her affluent friends to the event. Not in the murder mystery are the director of the play, Dorie, the chairman of the library board, and the stage manager, Lucy, the head librarian.

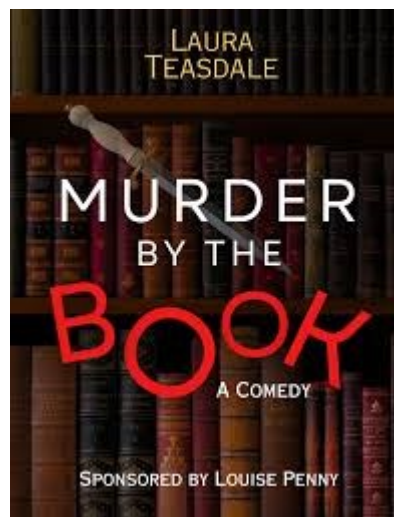
The play opens during the final rehearsal. The audience is expected in one hour. (Having been involved in community theatre since forever, this sentence makes me queasy.)

The cast take their places and freeze. Lucy and Dorie are among the audience. The plot: Sally asks her high school reunion friends to help her receive a

huge inheritance; she just has to spend one night in the haunted mansion. Sally opens a mysterious book, and "dies"...the "method," you know. Being a terrible actor, she stays dead. Instead of dealing with the fact that the actor seems to have passed out, the rest bicker; these people have issues!

When Sally finally comes to, the rehearsal continues. This time when she opens the book, it seems as if Sally really does die. Since Sally **MUST** be in the play to ensure her wealthy friends donate big bucks, Dorie, the director, becomes a puppet master, moving this dead body, throughout the play in the most ridiculous ways possible.

The rest of the play shows the crazy lengths the cast must go through in order to use a dead body as the leading lady. The plot doesn't really matter much. These antics are insane and will keep the audience in awe and stitches.



Of course, references to books abound. My favorite literary allusion is the sweet patron/cast member who is a cop trying to identify the killer. He channels Poirot, Miss Marple, Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew, and Armand Gamache. (Gamache is the main character of Louise Penny's

bestselling series. If you haven't read this series, I sincerely encourage you to do so.)

Ms. Teasdale provides a complete Producer's Handbook. It includes not just set, costume, and character suggestions, but templates for posters, programs, and complete "fill in the blank" press releases. She added cameos should the library group want to include local celebrities.

I encourage you to reach out to your town's library. Need new members? Here's a place to start. As we know, nothing brings people together like putting on a show!

For more information about the play, go to www.canadianplayoutlet.com.

