



CTAM

CALLBOARD

January 2024

CTAM presents monthly Virtual Roundtables in 2024

First one is Tuesday January 23, at 7:00 p.m.

The Board is dedicated to providing service to the community theatres in Michigan that they want and need. We've accomplished a great deal so far on this mission and we're proud to announce the next benefit for all our members -- that includes our precious Individual Members, as well as all members of our Affiliate member groups.

CTAM will be offering virtual Roundtables monthly that attendees will simply register for and join in, without the travel and overnight expenses. Learn from the comfort of your home, or gather everyone to watch in a group and then discuss later with your own people and your own set of issues!

Tuesday, January 23, Roundtable at 7:00 p.m.: How to Select Your Season

How do theatres select the right shows? Listen to what administrators from our largest groups have to say and see if you can discern any tips that might help your group pick more audience-friendly seasons. The panelists for our first Roundtable are listed here.

CTAM Zoom Roundtables are free to anyone who is a member of a CTAM Group Affiliate or who is an Individual Member of CTAM. If you or your group is not a current member - no worries. It's just a \$10 fee to join us.

To let us know you'll be there and receive attendance codes, please register here: <https://forms.gle/xT2bz59QMgPaUr7u7>

Panelists for the January Roundtable are as follow:



Jason Bertoia
Managing Director
Muskegon Civic Theatre



Deb Jackson
Executive Director
Old Town Playhouse



Walt Downes
President
Ionia Community Theatre



Host: Jamie Peterson
Players de Noc
Escanaba

HELPING COMMUNITY THEATRE *THRIVE* IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1951!



**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.*

Happy New Year!

We would like to thank all of the CTAM Affiliate Theatre Groups and wish all of you a successful 2024! Whether you produce shows in the Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall, may you have full houses, successful productions, and happy volunteers!

- Alpena Civic Theatre
- Audio Air Force
- Avon Players
- Bay City Players
- Central Park Players
- Center Stage Theatre
- Circle Theatre Grand Rapids
- Clarkston Village Players
- Clio Cast & Crew
- Community Theatre of Howell
- Farmington Players
- Fenton Village Players
- Flint Community Players
- Glen Arbor Players
- Grand Rapids Civic Theatre
- Grosse Pointe Theatre
- Holland Community Theatre
- Ionia Community Theatre
- Kalamazoo Civic Theatre
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- Northern Lites Readers Theatre
- Northland Players Inc.
- Old Town Playhouse
- Pinckney Players
- Pit and Balcony Theatre
- Players Guild of Dearborn
- Port Austin Community Players
- Rogers City Community Theatre
- Rosedale Community Players
- Southgate Community Players
- Stagecrafters
- The Sauk
- Thornapple Players
- Tawas Bay Players
- Twin City Players
- Village Players of Birmingham
- WE Players Inc.

Don't see your theatre on this list? Please contact ctamthrives@gmail.com for more information,



Welcome to New CTAM Group Affiliate Member - Circle Theatre Grand Rapids

Circle Theatre is located in West Michigan and specializes in summer theatre. The Theatre was founded to allow community performers of all ages to continue honing their craft and to provide another opportunity for directors, choreographers, musicians, designers and technicians to gain employment. Although Circle Theatre's more than 300 loyal volunteers are a vital part of the organization, Circle Theatre employs approximately 127 independent contractors from the West Michigan community on an annual basis.

Circle Theatre starts their season May 1 and runs through the middle of September each year. They perform five main stage, one Magic Circle (family friendly) and ten concerts (four different concerts in rotation) during this time.

Circle Theatre is located in the Performing Arts Center at Aquinas College and is the location for Aquinas College Theatrical program, as well as all of the Catholic secondary school theatre productions throughout the rest of the year.



Top left, *Rock of Ages* by Community Theatre of Howell; upper right is Monroe Community Players new readers' theatre venture; lower left is the Central Park Players; and bottom right is a photo from Stagecrafters in Royal Oak.



Tawas Bay Players NEW Ad-VENTURE: READERS' THEATRE

It was a dark and stormy night in August when we heard that our fall play was cancelled. What to do?! We were called and we served. Plan B became our name and mission. "We" are super director Suzan Nemeth, super producer Jolene Grusecki, and me, a humble co-conspirator.

We met at the Barnacle Bill's, a local bar/restaurant, from 8:00--10:00 am for five straight Tuesdays. After floundering a bit at the beginning, we realized that opening night was Friday the Thirteenth; we had our theme: *Tawas Chillers: Readers Theatre*.

Finding material was a challenge. We ended up with a LONG short play, called *Murder Box* by Reid Conrad. Suzan remembered Tony Targan's one act, *Turbulence*, and although not exactly matching the theme, we knew it would be a hit. Tony suggested we take a look at his *Trick or Treat*. We did. It was perfect. Next, a reading of "The Tell Tale Heart", fortunately in the public domain, and our cast shared spooky stories they found or experienced.

Instead of auditions, we held an "informational meeting" on Tuesday, September 6, asking people to explore Readers' theatre with us. Good turnout.....13, with more men than women and that is rare! Participants pulled a short sentence out of a hat to "perform" and the laughter ensued. End result: a cast of 16, including four new people.



Readers' theatre gave us a flexibility that you don't find with a regular show. Some people could only do one weekend; a cast member go sick--it was easy to substitute.

One rehearsal a week was the plan and we added two more as we got closer to opening night. The hardest part was figuring out how to get on and off stage, moving the stands, removing (or not!) the chairs. It was a work in progress through the run.

We went classic: music stands and dressed in black. Fortunately, TBP has large comfortable ORANGE chairs that worked for us. Starting out with just some lights and sound effects, we decided to zhuzh it up with props, and lots of action, but minimum movement. Leo and Pat Paveglio, (the Queen of Readers' Theatre in Northern Michigan) graciously gave us feedback and said it worked.

Our local paper wrote a wonderful review, a full page, and our local radio station had us on twice in the six weeks before the show.

As Pat asked at the "adjudication," "Did you have fun?" All answered yes. Job ONE done.

What's in the future? On Thursday, November 9, all interested adults were invited to a casual get-together where we read *It's a Wonderful Life*. Ideally, we will meet monthly to read, enjoy each other's company and plan for the future.

--Tara Western



Meet your Board of Directors, one by one!

JR Bornemann - JR is famously known around Midland and Bay City and many other cities as the best Lighting Designer and all around Tech Guru.

But what else is there to JR? Husband to Mel and dad to Addie....Hardest working man we all know but what else??

- Technically - he is only 10 years old. He's a leap day baby so he only gets his real birthday every 4 years.
- We know he is busy, but he has worked over 100 shows in 20 years
- Did you know he will be the New Technical Director for AACTFest25? Which means he will be working backstage at Nationals to ensure each production that has traveled over hundreds of miles is welcomed and has all the technical aspects of their shows covered.
- Collector of props and set pieces....as his house (or barn) which is affectionate called the "House of Wayward Props"
- Avid player of DNA aka Dungeons and Dragons



We all know **Chuck Goddeeris** -right???
But did you know....

- He has 14 fish tanks running which totals over 300 gallons of water, and includes 1 brackish tank (a mixture of fresh and salty water) and 1 saltwater tank
- An avid gamer who owns more than 100 board games
- Not always behind the scenes, as he played "Elf" Santa Claus in *The Toys Take-over Christmas* when he was 10 years old.
- And proud papa to four cats (Neo, Cali, Rayvn and Nova)
- He's the first one to help out in a crisis with the various groups in the metro Detroit area with whom he has affiliated.
- His expertise on the computer is well documented; he serves as CTAM's webmaster and has for many years.





Woodward Avenue travellers recognize this mural of the Village Players of Birmingham home!

Birmingham Village Players (BVP) is halfway through their 101st season, making them the second oldest community theatre in the state of Michigan behind Bay City Players (they are 106!). They've been producing shows in the same theatre, designed by Wallace Frost (who worked with Albert Kahn) for 98 of those years.

BVP started from an idea put forth by a high school student in 1922 and was founded a year later with 16 charter members. Their first production was titled *The Maker of Dreams*, which was remounted 100 years later to celebrate their centennial season.

They typically do five mainstage shows a year, two of which are musicals, two non-musicals and the fifth one varies from year to year. This is supplemented by three shows put on by the Village Youth Theatre, which is a separate entity that was founded in 2007, as well as three shows each year by their Playwrights at Work group, which was founded in 2002.

As you can imagine having 11 shows every year in one space can present many challenges, but with strong communication between the three groups and well-documented processes they are able to successfully manage a busy calendar each season. Additionally, the last few years they have partnered with a performer in the area who does the one-man show *It's a Wonderful Life* on the Friday immediately after Thanksgiving; part of the proceeds go to a charitable organization and part of the proceeds go towards capital expenses to improve the theatre. On top of all that, they are



Chuck G visits CTAM groups



adding their first Miscast Cabaret fundraiser, where actors will perform songs they would not normally be cast in.

The group functions by having two boards. An artistic board, which focuses on the creative vision and organization, and a board of trustees, which focuses on bringing in the money, setting budgets, allocating funds, and managing the building. Additionally, they have one paid employee who performs numerous day-to-day tasks (Tuesdays through Saturdays) in addition to managing the box office duties. Otherwise, they depend on their dues-paying members, which, for the first time in their history has exceeded 200 people, not to mention the countless other volunteers who provide the support and functionality to help them run their organization.

Their current president, Greg Ruvolo, first joined doing their One Act Festival in 2016 and "the experience was so incredible that I instantly realized I had discovered a place I could call home." Even though he has only been with the group for a shorter time he saw an opportunity to be a part of something bigger. Ruvolo told us, "I continued my involvement with BVP because I observed numerous chances for members to contribute to exceptional productions. Viewing the theatre from a fresh perspective, I identified various opportunities to enhance and progress the playhouse administratively. Making a noticeable impact on both the stage and behind the scenes requires a dedicated village of volunteers. Serving as the Board president is a privilege and honor that I deeply respect, and I hold it close to my heart with the hope of leaving a personal legacy that adds to the contributions of those who served before me." Some of Greg's recent contributions include renovating their lobby, updating their website, rebuilding a sponsorship program and the list is only growing from there.

Many of their members have been around for decades and continue to make an impact. Diane D'Agostino first became involved in 1978. She told

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us “I had seen a few shows there and I had been involved in theatre in High School. I really wanted to reconnect with it. I did one show... and then another... and another!” She has been on stage, backstage, directed, produced, served on boards, you name it. She even served a term as President of the Artistic Board. As she puts it, “I enjoy the universal ‘we’ that is inherent in theatre. Theatre is always a family. Theatre unifies people, joins people together. BVP has prevailed because of that ‘we’. It is the diversity of people, from ages to experience to backgrounds, that keeps BVP growing.”

Another member and former Artistic Board President, Stephen Sussman, shared a similar story. He first joined in 2009 after having seen many shows there previously. He told us “The people at BVP are very friendly and welcoming. I enjoyed the productions along with the quality of the shows and saw an opportunity to contribute. Since then, I have served on both Boards and numerous committees, performed onstage in many shows, have designed and helped build sets, and served as president of the Board of Directors.”

When asked what has helped BVP be so sustainable for so long, Sussman told us, “First of all, their ability to put on quality productions. I have heard audience members say so many times that this show was ‘a professional quality production’. That includes not only the performances of the actors, but the sets, staging, costuming and orchestras as well. Additionally, I feel the willingness and vision of BVP to put on shows and plays that were not as well-known providing a forum for new and exciting works, along with a deep commitment to diversity has brought in many talented performers and directors over the years. Balancing out the slate of shows each year with audience favorites and exciting new work has made for a sustainable and strong theatre group.”

Ruvolo also echoed those sentiments about sustainability. He stated, “1) Diverse Programming: Offering a variety of productions that cater to different tastes and preferences help attract talent and a broader audience. From classic plays to modern works, a diverse repertoire has helped engage and attract new theatergoers; 2) Community Engagement: The active involvement and support of our local community plays an im-

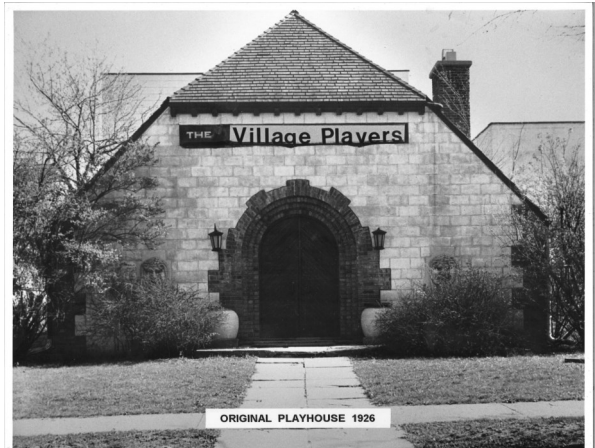


portant role. Regularly hosting events, fostering relationships with patrons, and ensuring a strong community presence contributes to sustained success and makes our presence known locally.”

These sentiments are commonplace at Village Players as you will frequently hear members state the old chestnut “it takes a village”. At BVP the statement does not apply to just putting on a show, but to keeping the season running, keeping the lights on, selecting your season and so on. At BVP they’ve created a culture that brings people together to make contributions that extend beyond being in shows. Their members have left an impact on how the lobby looks, what technology they use for lights and sound, running their social media or website, creating a youth theatre program, creating a group that cultivates playwriting, etc. They have created value for their members and that might just be part of their secret sauce that has enabled them to live beyond 100 seasons.

--Chuck Goddeeris

(Ed Note: This is the first in a periodic series of articles about our individual and affiliate members. Contact the writer directly [charlesgoddeeris@gmail.com] if you want to suggest a group to be featured.)



Top, Village production of *Shakespeare In Love*; lower left is their summer production of readings by their Playwrights@Work group in 2020; and a photo of their original home.

2024 Theatre in Michigan

Jan 7, 12-14, 2024	BAY CITY PLAYERS	<i>The Revolutionists</i>
Jan 11 - 21, 2024	FLINT COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Amelie</i>
Jan 11 - 21, 2024	ALPENA CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Don't Drink the Water</i>
Jan 12 - 21, 2024	STAGECRAFTERS	<i>Girls Weekend</i>
Jan 12 - 20, 2024	MUSKEGON CIVIC THEATRE	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the</i>
Jan 12 - 21, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>The Lion in the Winter</i>
Jan 19 - 24, 2024	PIT AND BALCONY	<i>Romeo & Juliet</i>
Jan 12-27, 2024	CLARKSTON VILLAGE PLAYERS	<i>Office Hours</i>
Jan 12-28, 2024	VILLAGE PLAYERS OF BIRMINGHAM	<i>The MouseTrap</i>
Jan 12-28, 2023	PLAYERS GUILD OF DEARBORN	<i>Blithe Spirit</i>
Jan 18 - 27, 2024	MASTER ARTS	<i>Spread Your Garment Over Me</i>
Jan 19 - 28, 2024	GRAND RAPIDS CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Clyde's</i>
Jan 19 - Feb 3, 2024	AVON PLAYERS	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the</i>
Jan 26 - 28 & Feb 2-10, 2024	ROSEDALE COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>The Bucket List of Booze Club</i>
Jan 26 - Feb 4, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Cats - young actors</i>
Jan 26 - Feb 4, 2024	GROSSE POINTE THEATRE	<i>9 to 5</i>
Feb 1-11, 2024	THE SAUK	<i>Criminal Mischief (AACT New Playfest)</i>
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	<i>Audio Air Force Valentine's Special</i>
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>
March 8-24, 2024	PLAYERS GUILD OF DEARBORN	<i>Our Town</i>

If your information is incorrect or missing and you are an affiliate member of CTAM, please send the correct information to [The Editor](#) to be included in the next issue.

The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Welcome to 2024! May this year bring you more happiness and theatre.

Dramatic Publishing Company's *Sherlock Holmes and the First Baker Street Irregular* by Brian Guehring ©2015 is a wonderful opportunity for introducing young people to the iconic Sherlock Holmes while casting many kids. The play includes two mysteries: "The Red-Headed League" and "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." The show runs approximately 70 minutes with 7-13 males; 5-12 females, with up to 13 more of either gender. Happily, Guehring provides suggestions for doubling or expanding the cast.

Sets: One exterior of Coberg Square which includes a marketplace, a pawnshop, and a bank; the interior set depicts the cozy 221B Baker Street with fireplace.

Optional: place projection screens around the set to highlight clues from the mysteries.

The first scene introduces a street gang of orphans as Wiggins, the head of the band, brags about her pick-pocketing skills, then tries to steal from a disguised Holmes. Sherlock steals the ring Wiggins stole from a master criminal, leaving a note in her pocket saying "come to 221B Baker St. to get your ring back."

Sherlock allows Wiggins to help solve the two mysteries and agrees to teach Wiggins to be a detective. This enables her to help her gang survive on the streets.

Production challenges/opportunities: 1880's London period accurate costumes, with the sets being as simple or as elaborate as you wish; choreography for a fight scene for six; at least one character with vibrant red hair, a blue carbuncle, a large Christmas goose (dead!).

Guehring does a terrific job of being true to the spirit of Sherlock Holmes while allowing his young protégé to help. All ages.



Photos from WE Productions, CTAM members from East Tawas.



Have you heard about *The Play That Goes Wrong*, yes? Published by Methuen Drama and written by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, and

Henry Shields this play within a play is a hilarious, truly a laugh a minute production. When a drama society receives a large inheritance, they decide to produce an ambitious 1920s murder mystery. They see no obstacles, so when everything goes wrong, hilarity ensues. This script seems to include every single thing* that can go wrong as a director, it would be challenging to actually plan and survive these messes...and so much fun.

The setting is the rooms of the wealthy young Charles Haversham. Two levels: the ground floor is a living area with a door center stage. The upper level is Haversham's study with many bookcases, and a door to the back stairs. The two levels are connected by an old-fashioned elevator.

I cannot even start to describe the chaos, so here's an example: while the audience enters, the Stage Manager frantically attempts to fasten a mantel to the fireplace. She asks an audience member to hold it for her as she goes to get a tool. As the mantel is never fixed, many mishaps and odd solutions caused by having NO mantel occur. The bits are cleverly varied. All ages.