



## AACT Annual Survey of Shows

Do you include the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) magazine, Spotlight, in your regular reading materials? You should! Their most recent issue (Winter 2025) includes a summary by Michael Cochran of their 2026 Season Survey. Here are some of the highlights, especially about seasons and productions.

They “gathered responses from 110 theatres from across the country, offering a fascinating look at how community theatres are planning, programming and adapting to today’s landscape.

“Some of the statistics mirror previous years, including the number of productions staged by individual theatres, as well as the dominance of non-musical productions over musical productions. Last year’s top musical, *Waitress*, didn’t appear in this year’s list of productions. This follows the trend of new releases trending to the top of the list and then dropping off quickly.

“*The Rocky Horror Show* jumped up from fourth place last year to first place this year, and *Annie* – which wasn’t in the top four musicals last year – tied for the number one slot. In non-musicals, the newly released *The Cottage*

jumped to the top spot this year.”

Of the 139 unique musicals submitted, the most frequently produced titles include:

- *Annie* (7 productions)
- Richard O’Brien’s *The Rocky Horror Show* (7)
- Disney’s *Frozen* (5)
- Roald Dahl’s *Matilda The Musical* (5)

Of the 228 non-musicals submitted, the most frequently produced titles include:

- *The Cottage* (6)
- *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors* (4)
- Stephen King’s *Misery* (4)
- *Silent Sky* (4)
- *The Importance of Being Earnest* (4)
- Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap* (4)

Of the 46 Youth titles submitted, the most frequently produced titles include:

- *Once Upon a Mattress: Youth Edition* (3)
- Disney’s *Finding Nemo* (2)
- *Shrek The Musical Jr.* (2)
- *Winnie the Pooh* (2)

“When it comes to choosing shows, name recognition reigns supreme. Two-thirds of respondents said community familiarity with a title was their top consideration. Just behind that was the type of show – whether comedy, drama or musical. The balancing act of appealing to audiences while stretching artistic boundaries remains a familiar challenge.”





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](mailto:maryloubritton@gmail.com). *Updated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Administrator and should be sent to [CTAMthrives@gmail.com](mailto:CTAMthrives@gmail.com).*

# Playwriting Contest deadline is Memorial Day -- May 25, 2026

The theme for your 10-minute play for next year's CTAM Playwriting Contest is **Winning and Losing**. For the short play section of the contest, your play must focus on some aspect of **winning or losing** something or someone!

Just think about all the possible dramatic situations you can conjure up, using that scenario! Betting on the ponies ... investing your IRA money on a sure thing ... watching your daughter's soccer game ... losing your winning lottery ticket ... losing your hearing ... winning a crooked poker game and then losing your car keys ... the list goes on and on!

The CTAM 2026 Playwriting Contest is underway with a submission deadline of Memorial Day 2026, giving you plenty of time to get your entry ready. Winners will be announced at next year's Fall Conference. There are two categories: Full-length plays and ten-minute plays. The full-length plays do not fall under the topical suggestion above.

Full-length plays must be a normal evening's entertainment of 90+ minutes; the short play should not be longer than 10 minutes. Whereas the full-length play can involve any number of characters, settings, scenes and costumes, the shorter play should be a single location (no scene changes or passage of time), contemporary language and minimal set dressing, props and costumes.

The contest in either category is open to residents of Michigan and should be accompanied by a letter of acknowledgement from a CTAM affiliate group. This letter only states that the theatre group is aware of the playwright and supports their effort, but not that the author is necessarily a member. The purpose of the letter is to connect the affiliate group with additional talent in the community and to remind the playwright that CTAM affiliate groups are interested in their new work and supportive of the effort.



# Kalamazoo Civic offers spectacular 97th season to their audiences



The Kalamazoo Civic Theatre's 97th season is off to a great start, per the photos above from *Frozen* (above left), *Annie* (above right) and *Camelot* (below). Coming up next: *The Cherry Orchard* in January and the Penguin Project's *The SpongeBob Musical: Youth Edition* in February.

A special Thank You to Betsy Willis for adjudicating our production of *Camelot*.



Vanishing Elephant Players, the in-house theatre company of the Historic Masonic Temple of Bay City, was founded in 2017 when a group of like-minded creatives set out to create a theatre group to fill in the gaps that larger, more established groups might leave behind. VEP is a reasonably new member of CTAM and we're pleased to officially welcome them. We thought you might want to know more about them!

Now in their seventh season, they present a wide variety of shows, in a wide variety of genres, from full-length productions to more casual theatrical events like cabarets and story-telling nights. They are proud to present shows by well-known playwrights as well as local up-and-comers—from Shakespeare to your neighbor, and everyone in-between. They also place a special emphasis on showcasing stories that might otherwise be underrepresented.

Vanishing Elephant Players is proud to foster an environment of learning and collaboration, in addition to entertaining. They regularly offer workshops for on and offstage interests, collaborating with groups such as IATSE and BLAQN, and other theatre companies like The Intrepid Theatre. We take the term "community theatre" to heart -- anyone with the desire to take part in the artform is welcome to participate, learn, grow, entertain, and have fun!



Vanishing Elephant Players is committed to increasing accessibility in the arts. They collaborate with American Sign Language interpreting-training students who, under the direction and supervision of licensed Interpreters and members of the Deaf community, receive an experience that is unique and necessary in their training. In exchange, the actors get the opportunity to learn about accessibility, while working

alongside interpreters on stage. Be sure to look forward to ASL-Interpreted performances in the future!

Again, we welcome Vanishing Elephant Players to CTAM and are anxious to find out where the name came from!



Left, *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914* was offered by the Masonic Temple Vanishing Elephant Players. This was a performance interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL). Top of the page is a flyer for *Rent*, performed last month.

# What's going on for the holidays?



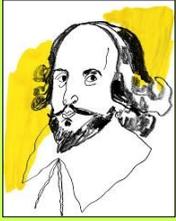
Left, Eileen White, Director, and Alan Semonian, Producer, enjoying "front of house" time at opening night of *Lost in Yonkers* at Birmingham Village Players. Right, Bella (Andrea McDonald) confiding in her brother Eddie (Russell Boyle) also in *Lost in Yonkers*.

Right, Monroe Community Players offered a staged reading of the old standby, A Christmas Carol.

Directly below, Monroe Community Players had great success with Sylvia, about the lovable dog.

Below right, Gratiot County Players held a Fix-The-Ceiling Fundraiser in early December. This rehearsal promises a grand evening of entertainment.





# Playwright's Corner

By Mary Lou Britton

## When is it a Ten-Minute Play and when is it a skit?

Nothing rankles my skin more than someone calling our ten-minute plays a 'skit.' To the uninformed, there doesn't seem to be a big difference, but if you are a playwright agonizing over your play and trying to solve the challenges for your protagonist, it's an insulting comment.

A skit, to me, is a retelling of something that happened to someone. Yes, there is dialog and there can be movement, but generally a skit relies on twisting our language or coming up with a punch line to end it. It seems to me that very often a skit is just an elaborate telling of a joke, like the famous shaggy dog story.

My thesaurus calls a skit a parody, satire, spoof or burlesque sketch. All those alternate words indicate to me that a skit makes fun of something or someone!

Many of the skits you see have farcical, physical comedy in them (think Abbott & Costello!) or, to the opposite extreme, they rely on tricky language or words or phrases. The result there being just two people talking about something and there is no progression, improvement or change. It just is!

A skit generally doesn't have a 'plot' or a story line, whereas a true ten minute play needs to have a well constructed plot that promotes change to someone's being, behavior or beliefs.

You must have a protagonist who has a strong and believable desire for something and an antagonist who with equal passion wants to keep the protagonist from achieving that goal. It's really pretty simple, once you determine who wants what ... and why!

Another thing a ten minute play has that a skit doesn't is a beginning, a middle and an end. As with any play in the beginning, you need a period of exposition so that the audience

understands where you are, who the characters are and what the relationships between the players are. In the typical short play, you have maybe two and a half pages to do this.

Many time in skits, this step is skipped and the observers must figure that all out themselves. Skit writers don't want to take the time to be sure the audience understands and, instead, get right to the funny or risqué lines!

There is a well defined arc of the play that you need to consider in writing your play:

**Exposition** -- Setting the scene and revealing the characters and their relationships with each other. Some backstory may be included, but a bare minimum that gives insight to character action and behavior. *Pages 1-3 of your planned ten pages.*

**Inciting Incident** -- This is the thing that starts the play on the road to the plot. This is the challenge that the character is thrown. It's the starting of the clock. It's probably the reason you wanted to write the play in the first place. *Pages 2-4.*

**Rising Action** – These are the pages where you build the story. Characters are introduced and fully fleshed out within this part of the play. Conflicts are shown and allegiances weighed. *Pages 4-7.*

**Climax** – The moment where things will never be the same as a result of some action that has come in the previous scenes. Tides turn, fortunes are won, loves are lost. Audiences gasp. *Pages 7-8.*

**Falling Action** – The conflicts and challenges in the previous scenes are confronted and resolved. *Page 9.*

**Turning Point** – This is not in all plays, but this moment is usually the acceptance or rejection of everything that has come before by the protagonist.

**Resolution** – How things work out in the end. Is there a wedding or a funeral? *Pages 8-10.*

If you keep to this arc for your play, you can never be accused of writing a skit! It will move steadily to a satisfying resolution of the concerns and goals your characters are stretching for.

# Michigan Theatre in the new year!

Flint Community Players	<i>Champagne Problems</i>	January 8 - 11, 2026
Alpena Civic Theatre	<i>The God Commitment</i>	January 8 - 18, 2026
Ann Arbor Civic Theatre	<i>The Humans</i>	January 9 - 18, 2026
Pit and Balcony	<i>Stone Point (World Premiere)</i>	January 9 - 18, 2026
Avon Players Theatre	<i>A Small Family Business</i>	January 9 - 24, 2026
Clarkston Village Players	<i>Spitfire Grill</i>	January 9 - 24, 2026
Village Players of Birmingham	<i>Once Upon a Mattress</i>	January 9 - 25, 2026
Players Guild of Dearborn	<i>Picasso at the Lapin Agile</i>	January 9 - 25, 2025
Old Town Playhouse	<i>The Hobbit *</i>	January 16 - 24, 2026
Muskegon Civic Theatre	<i>Once on this Island</i>	January 16 - 25, 2026
Stagecrafters	<i>Five Lesbians Eating a Quiche</i>	January 16 - 25, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i>	January 16 - February 1, 2026
Bay City Players	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	January 23 - February 1, 2026
Rosedale Community Players	<i>Intimate Apparel</i>	January 23 - February 7, 2026
Vanishing Elephant Players	<i>Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors</i>	January 30 - February 1, 2026
Old Town Playhouse	<i>Whose Life Is it Anyway? **</i>	January 30 - February 7, 2026
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Almost Maine **</i>	January 30 - February 8, 2026
The Sauk	<i>Arsenic and Old Lace</i>	February 5 - 15, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>The SpongeBob Musical *</i>	February 6 - 15, 2026
Holland Community Theatre	<i>Mom's Gift</i>	February 6 - 21, 2026
Old Town Playhouse	<i>Misery (main stage)</i>	February 13 - 21, 2026
Clio Cast and Crew	<i>Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs</i>	February 13 - 22, 2026
Community Theatre of Howell	<i>Our Town</i>	February 13 - 22, 2026
Stagecrafters	<i>Agatha Christie's Murder On The Orient</i>	February 13 - March 1, 2026
Muskegon Civic Theatre	<i>Love Loss and What I Wore</i>	February 14 - 22, 2026
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	February 19 - March 1, 2026
Pit and Balcony - After Dark Produc-	<i>For Colored Girls Who Have Considered</i>	February 20 & 21, 2026
Bay City Players	<i>Morning After Grace</i>	February 20 - 22, 2026
Southgate Community Players	<i>You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown</i>	February 20 - 28, 2026
Livonia Community Players	<i>The White Rose</i>	February 20 - 28, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Dogfight</i>	February 20 - March 1, 2026
WE Players	<i>Acts of God</i>	February 20 - March 1, 2026
Owosso Community Players	<i>Frozen</i>	February 20 - March 8, 2026
Twin City Players	<i>Emma</i>	February 20 - March 8, 2026
Pinckney Players	<i>Frozen Jr. *</i>	February 28 - March 1, 2026

\* Indicates youth production. \*\* Second stage production

✓ If your information is incorrect or missing and you are an affiliate group of CTAM, please send the correct information to [CTAMthrives@gmail.com](mailto:CTAMthrives@gmail.com) to be included in the next issue.

