



Community Theatre
Association of Michigan

CALLBOARD JULY 2026

CTAMthrives@gmail.com



Photos Provided by Circle Theatre

Member Theatre Spotlight

Celebrating 75 Seasons of Circle Theatre

In 2027, Circle Theatre will celebrate its 75th season of bringing outstanding live theatre to West Michigan audiences.

The vision for a summer community theatre in Grand Rapids was first conceived by Grand Rapids theatre legend Norma Brink, who believed the community needed quality theatre during the summer months. What began in the ballroom of the historic Rowe Hotel has grown into one of West Michigan's favorite summer traditions. Like many theatres, Circle has called several locations home throughout its history, including the Pantlind Hotel (now part of the Amway Grand Plaza) and the John Ball Zoo Pavilion.

Since 2003, Circle Theatre has performed at the Aquinas College Performing Arts Center, presenting a full season of entertainment from May through September. Each season includes a Magic Circle family production, three musicals, two plays, and a concert series featuring a rotating variety of musical genres. Mainstage productions run for three weeks, totaling 13 performances, while concert performances are presented on select Monday evenings throughout the summer.

Producing six major productions in just five months is no small feat. With approximately eleven days between the strike of one show and the opening of the next, Circle's dedicated volunteers and staff work tirelessly to keep the season moving. Circle Theatre's 400-seat, three-quarter thrust stage creates an intimate experience, bringing audiences closer to the action and making every performance feel personal.

The Circle Theatre 2026 season continues with: Newsies, Nana's Naughty Knickers, Sister Act. Concert Series: Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, The Music of Genesis, Play That Funky Music, Family Affair.

As Circle Theatre looks ahead to its 75th season, it remains committed to the same mission that inspired Norma Brink decades ago: bringing quality, affordable live theatre to the West Michigan community and creating unforgettable summer memories for generations of audiences.

Thank you for renewing your membership:

Audio Air Force
Avon Players
Bay City Players
Circle Theatre
Clarkston Village Players
Clio Cast and Crew
Community Theatre of Howell
Glen Arbor Players
Flint Community Players
Holland Community Theatre
Ionia Community Theatre
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre
Lebowsky Center for the Arts
Manistee Civic Players
Muskegon Civic Theatre
Northland Players
Old Town Playhouse
Players Guild of Dearborn
Port Austin Community
Stagecrafters
The Sauk
Taway Bay Players
Twin City Players
Village Players of Birmingham

Mark your calendars! The Community Theatre Association of Michigan (CTAM) is returning to Midland, Michigan for our annual Fall Conference on Saturday, September 26.

2025 -26 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Submit articles, upcoming events and any other theatre related news before the end of each month for publication in the next issue.

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.

Up-dated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Administrator and should be sent to CTAMthrives@gmail.com.

Registration: <https://ctam.ludus.com/200540395> (discount code for those theatres who are members - email ctamthrives@gmail.com to find out how) Whether you're an actor, director, designer, technician, board member, or volunteer, you'll find workshops, discussions, and networking opportunities designed to strengthen your theatre and inspire your next production.

NEW THIS YEAR – Master Class Opportunity!

We're excited to offer an exclusive 4-hour Master Class led by nationally recognized theatre educators Kathy Pingel and Ron Ziegler. Many of you know Kathy and Ron from AACT Festivals, where they have served as adjudicators, commissioners, workshop leaders, and presenters. Their decades of experience in acting, directing, education, and community theatre leadership make this an exceptional learning opportunity.

Master Class Details

Title: Acting in Harmony

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$50 (includes lunch)

Registration: Limited to ensure a quality, hands-on experience.

CTAM Member Discount:

Current CTAM member theatres can email ctamthrives@gmail.com to receive a \$5 discount code before registering.

Register today: <https://ctam.ludus.com/200540316>

Conference Workshops

We're building a conference based on the workshops you've requested over the years. We appreciate your feedback and are continuing to add sessions to make this one of our best conferences yet. More workshops will be announced soon!

Ben Zylman - You're a Character!

You've been cast in a great role—now what?

Whether you're playing the lead or singing in the ensemble, this fast-paced, interactive workshop explores techniques for creating rich, believable characters. Learn about script analysis, subtext, character motivation, and building a compelling backstory that brings every role to life.

Kathie Johnson - Working with Puppetry

Discover techniques, practical applications, and creative possibilities for incorporating puppetry into theatrical productions.

Marty Golub - Master the Mini-Plot: Designing Big with Limited Fixtures

Learn how thoughtful lighting design can create maximum impact—even with limited equipment and resources.

Marty Golub - Unplugging the Rig: Deploying Wireless (Hybrid) DMX

Explore how wireless and hybrid DMX systems can simplify installation, increase flexibility, and modernize your lighting setup.

SAVE THE DATE - SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

CTAM FALL CONFERENCE

Lisa Cripps - Fundraising, Foundations & Grants

Gain practical strategies for identifying funding opportunities, writing stronger grant applications, and building sustainable fundraising programs for your theatre.

Roundtable Discussion - How to Select Your Season

Join fellow theatre leaders for an open discussion on choosing a successful season. Share ideas, learn what other theatres are planning, and discuss balancing audience favorites, artistic goals, budgets, and volunteer resources.

Master Class

Acting in Harmony

One of the greatest challenges—and rewards—of community theatre directing is welcoming first-time performers while continuing to challenge experienced actors.

In this engaging four-hour, hands-on workshop, participants will:

- Explore the difference between equity and equality when working with performers.
- Learn techniques for teaching beginning actors while keeping rehearsals engaging for veterans.
- Practice innovative acting exercises and rehearsal techniques.
- Develop stronger methods of character building.
- Examine play construction and storytelling.
- Build strategies for creating casts where newcomers and seasoned performers work together seamlessly.

The goal is to expand your directing toolbox and create productions where there is no discernible difference between an actor making their stage debut and one with years of experience.

About the Instructors

Kathy Pingel retired as Director of Education and Youth Programming for the Des Moines Community Playhouse after a distinguished career spanning theatre education, directing, and performance studies. She has directed more than 50 productions and has taught and directed throughout the United States and internationally, including Germany.

A respected adjudicator for the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT), Kathy has taught the AACT Adjudication Seminar at multiple national festivals. She was named an AACT Fellow in 2017 and received the organization's prestigious Art Cole Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019. Along with Ron Ziegler, she received the Cloris Leachman Award for Best Direction for *The Hobbit*.

Ron Ziegler recently retired as Festivals Coordinator for the American Association of Community Theatre following a career spanning more than 40 years. He has served as educator, director, producer, arts administrator, festival coordinator, and AACT President.

Ron has adjudicated theatre festivals across the United States and internationally while directing productions in Iowa, South Dakota, Kentucky, Florida, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Germany. He is an AACT Fellow and received the Art Cole Lifetime Leadership Award in 2023. His production of *Blackbird* represented the United States at AACTWorldFest in 2022.

Whether you're looking to improve your acting, directing, technical skills, fundraising, or theatre leadership, the CTAM Fall Conference offers something for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you in Midland on September 26!



"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being." - Oscar Wilde

Prez Says:

Summertime Self-Assessment

By: *CTAM President Chuck Goddeeris*



We're just over a month into summer and it's that time of year where most theatres have a lull in production schedules as they transition to their next season. So, this makes it a great time to do a self-assessment of your organization. What are things to look for in a self-assessment? The overall checklist of items is vast but I like to break it down into three key areas.

First and foremost, examine your bylaws alongside your mission statement.

Are you complying with your bylaws? Do your bylaws align with your mission statement? Do your bylaws appear outdated? If so, what steps can you take to evolve them to meet your current needs?

Your bylaws and your mission statement are the pillars of your organization. They should guide what you and your fellow volunteers are doing to fulfill your mission and goals. That brings me to the next critical area to assess – your volunteers and the duties they fulfill.

Personally, I feel your volunteers (and talent) are your most valuable resource. Not the building or location where you put on shows, which would be second. Without your talent and volunteers, you have no shows. You can put a show on in a parking lot, in a park, in a library, etc; you don't need a permanent or elaborate space to put on shows, nor do you need fancy technology, but yes, those things certainly help make things easier.

So, make sure you check in with your regular volunteers. Make sure they want to remain committed to any assigned duties or committees they are chairing for the coming year. And most importantly, thank them for their dedication and hard work. I know my share of volunteers who say they don't need a "thank you" but that's not to say they don't want one. As a volunteer we know we are most likely not getting paid to do the tasks we do, but they still take up our time and a "thank you" can go a long way to keeping them happy.

PROTIP: Praise in public. If you have general meetings, praise and thank your volunteers there. They may not act in shows, so this is their best and probably only opportunity to get their standing ovation.

Lastly, assess your documentation and policies. Make sure your organization is organized and able to sustain itself. If you don't have everyone's best practices written down, especially for the administrative and thankless duties, then you are doing your organization a disservice. This comes in especially handy if someone say needs to step away or has to move for one reason or another, or plain just needs a break. Nobody wants to see the organization fail, and in this day and age, when you can quickly store and share things in the cloud, there is no excuse for not taking some time to write down these processes and share them with other members of the organization.

Everything else you assess is ultimately a byproduct of those three areas: bylaws/mission statement, volunteer management and policy/process documentation. That's the foundation of any great theatre and that's what enables our great state to produce so many examples. From Bay City to Birmingham to Grand Rapids to Dearborn to Owosso to Troy to Escanaba to Kalamazoo and beyond, the list grows every year.

So, I encourage your organization to do a self-exam in your off months and your theatre will be much stronger for it. If you're not sure where to start or need a push, that's one of many things we at CTAM can assist with. We are here to support, connect and strengthen our community theatres so they can thrive and grow! Do not hesitate to reach out to us and we are more than happy to help!

Member Theatre Group Shows

Support CTAM's Amazing Member Productions

Circle Theatre Grand Rapids	<i>Newsies</i>	July 9 - 25, 2026
Vanishing Elephant Players	<i>The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals</i>	July 24 - August 2, 2026
Center Stage Theatre	<i>Shrek</i>	July 10 - 12, 17-19, 2026
Fenton Village Players	<i>Little Shop of Horrors</i>	July 10 - 26, 2026
Players Guild of Dearborn	<i>Chicago Teen Edition</i>	July 23 - 26, 2026
Bay City Players	<i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>	July 24 - August 2, 2026
Glen Arbor Players	<i>Savannah Sipping Society</i>	July 24 - August 2, 2026
Ionia Community Theatre	<i>The Crucible</i>	August 14-16, 2026
Manistee Civic Players	<i>Annie</i>	July 31 - August 9, 2026
The Sauk	<i>Footloose</i>	July 31 - August 9, 2026
Holland Community Theatre	<i>Get Smart (teens)</i>	August 6 - 15, 2026
Circle Theatre Grand Rapids	<i>Nana's Naughty Knickers</i>	August 6 - 22, 2026
Port Austin Community Players	<i>Odd Couple - female version</i>	August 7 - 16, 2026
Three Rivers Community Players	<i>The Crucible</i>	August 7 - 16, 2026
Ionia Community Theatre	<i>The Crucible</i>	August 14-16, 2026
Northland Players	<i>Steel Magnolias</i>	August 18 - 20, 2026
Twin City Players	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	August 21 - September 6, 2026
The Sauk	<i>Pickleball</i>	August 27 - 30, 2026
Vanishing Elephant Players	<i>HIR</i>	August 28 - 30, 2026

If your show or shows are missing from the list please contact our webmaster and we will remedy the situation as quickly as possible.

For a full list of our Member Theatres [please click here.](#)

