



**CTM**  
Community Theatre Association of Michigan

# CALLBOARD

February 2021

## Register now for Virtual AACTFest 2021!

Here is your opportunity to enjoy a week of national company performances, live adjudications, virtual workshops, keynotes, interactive exhibitors, the Festival Awards Ceremony, and more. The national AACTfest has always been the pinnacle of the year and brings attendees (or watchers, as this year!) some of the finest theatre available across the country.

Virtual AACTFest 2021 (June 14 to 20, 2021) will continue to have a strong emphasis in artistic excellence in performances, adjudication, and education, but the look and feel will be unlike anything you have seen.

Full Virtual Festival Passes, National Company Performances Passes, and Education Passes (including Keynote speaker) are available. **Save Now: A Super-Saver Kick-Off rate is offered until February 15, 2021 – Save 20% off a full festival registration.**

Register for [Virtual AACTFest 2021!](https://aact.org/21)

AMERICA'S  
**National  
Community  
Theatre Festival**

VIRTUAL  
June 14-20, 2021

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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](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).

**Are you doing a ten-minute or full-length play competition?**

To fill their time and performance slots, many groups have started paying attention to their home-grown playwrights! Our resident curmudgeon, Dexter Brigham, in his monthly column this issue (Page 3) is talking about developing additional internal talent through playwriting.

Grand Rapids Civic is doing a competition and festival this spring. Ten-minute scripts from anywhere in Michigan are solicited before their February 26 deadline. More info at [www.grct.org/tenforall](http://www.grct.org/tenforall).

Grosse Pointe Theatre is also mounting a competition and festival for 2022, including a four-session virtual playwriting workshop this summer. Go to [gpt.org](http://gpt.org) for more information this spring.

If your group is so inspired to host playwriting events, the *Callboard* staff would like to announce deadlines and help recruit new and different writers for you. Please send us the particulars on your contest and we'll include this information monthly. Send to the Editor at [maryloubritton@gmail.com](mailto:maryloubritton@gmail.com).

**CTAM Calendar of Events**

Wed., February 3 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
Wed., March 3 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
Wed., April 7 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
Wed., May 5 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
Saturday, May 15	Playwriting Contest entry deadline
Wed., June 2 7:00 p.m. by Zoom	CTAM Board Meeting
June 14-20	National AACTfest (see article on page 1)



*It seems to me...*

*By Dexter Brigham*



## A Silver Lining in a Tough Time: New Works

Everywhere you look, it seems, the pandemic's toll on the arts can be seen: shuttered venues, furloughed artists, heartfelt social media posts and memes about the desire to get back into the rehearsal studio. The Great White Way has been dark for ten months now, and the ecosystem of national tours, regional premieres, and new licensing releases that, directly or indirectly, affects every community theatre in America has been similarly put on ice. Our budgeting and programming horizons have shrunk from eighteen months to barely three, as we frantically scour the latest announcement from the Governor's office for a hint of what is to come.

There is plenty of bad news to go around. But we are resilient folk, and throughout 2020 we worked hard to reinvent ourselves, to find new ways to tell stories and to reach our audiences: parking lot performances, livestreams, Zoom readings, driveway shows. Everyone contributed to the work: the licensing companies scrambled to launch streaming services, the playwrights optimized their plays for new formats and made them available, actors built makeshift soundstages in their homes, and producers threw everything at the wall hoping something would stick.

A lot of things did not stick: it turns out that people don't really want to pay much, if at all, for a livestreamed play. At least not enough to make it a profitable enterprise. But some things did work: we discovered that audiences enjoy the intimacy and access that comes with being able to interact with performing artists on a livestream. I'm looking forward to seeing how that affects what we do in the coming years.

But the big, shiny silver lining that inspires me the most is how many new plays and play-

wrights are seeing the light of day. Producing a play takes resources, so it's a risk for a theatre to program a premier or an unproven property. But with our producing scope reduced to the narrowest possible set of circumstances, with ticket revenue unable to even earn back the cost of the royalties, our Zoom performances and livestreams have begun to be populated by the new work of playwrights who struggled to find opportunities to be seen before.

Now, I will acknowledge that the economic reasons for this are not good. Playwrights deserve to be compensated for their work. But in a time when *no one* is being compensated for their work, when the theatre industry is operating at a fraction of its capacity, it's wonderful to have these new voices get the chance to come to the forefront of our seasons, to have their stories told, and to hear their characters come to life in the hands of our actors. Even established playwrights are experimenting with new forms and media. Hopefully, as we begin to transition into a post-pandemic world and our stages come back to life, these new voices and ideas will stay with us, and the canon of the American theatre will be richer for it.

Like the rings of a tree, every era of the American theatre has distinct markings that reveal times of growth and hardship. This ring that we are forging right now has the potential to bring us a new generation of storytellers and innovative ways to tell those stories.



## ART APART: Bay City Players answer to 2021.

Bay City Players is breaking into the new year with an exciting new program, ART APART! 2020 was a year of challenges for those of us in the theatre world — between navigating an ever-changing landscape of new restrictions and ensuring the safety of our volunteers — we nevertheless were immensely proud to bring our patrons more than 30 virtual readings of original works during one of our most difficult seasons to date. As we move into 2021 the future is perhaps a little brighter, but still uncertain. This is where a dedicated committee of Bay City Players volunteers and I came up with this exciting new program. Our virtual programming was suspended as we planned on re-opening our theatre with a production of *A Christmas Carol: A Live Radio Play*, but due to the elevated cases of COVID in the area, our Board made the decision to suspend all programming for the safety of our volunteers and audience members. The committee, comprised of Jean Ciampi, Debbie Lake, Marci Rogers, John Tanner and I, put our heads together after being asked by the Board of Directors to resume virtual programming.

The title (kudos to Jean) means that we can still make art happen, even though we still must be apart. We will be presenting original plays, maybe a night of poetry, perhaps a short novella and some pleasant surprises. The program started with an original play, *The Bold and Bob*, by local playwright Jean Ciampi and February will feature an original comedy, *All Bark, No Bite*, by Massachusetts playwright, Kara Emily Krantz. Of course, we at Players (and every other theatre big or and small) are eagerly awaiting the day that we can get back into the rehearsal space, crack open a script and get the highlighter out, work scenes with some great actors and bask in the glory of creating art together. Until then, we have ART APART! Watch Players Facebook page for future events.

—Michael Wisniewski



### 2021 CTAM playwriting contest

## The Play's the Thing!

The bard asks, "But, soft!  
What light through yonder  
window breaks?"

We answer, "Tis fair Juliet  
who writes the prize-  
winning play for the **2021  
CTAM playwriting contest**,  
for she knoweth "the play's  
the thing" that will bring  
her fame and fortune.



You, too, should be writing  
your entry without delay.

The contest opened January 1<sup>st</sup> and will close on  
May 15<sup>th</sup>. Don't delay for, "Tomorrow, and tomor-  
row, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from  
day to day" and you don't want to miss this oppor-  
tunity.

Contest rules, judges' criteria, suggestions and more  
at <http://ctam.online/playwriting-contest/>

Questions? Email [ctamplaywriting@gmail.com](mailto:ctamplaywriting@gmail.com)

It's all up to you. Is your play "to be or not to be?"  
Get writing!

## Festival and Conference Committee starts planning

On January 5, the CTAM Festival and Confer-  
ence Committee held it's first meeting for 2021.  
The Committee is comprised of seven members  
from all over the state.

The committee discussed their plan for the up-  
coming year and how continuity between  
Spring and Fall Conferences is an important  
component to being successful this year. The  
decision was made to hold virtual confer-  
ences for 2021 and look to go in-person in  
2022.

Currently, the committee is looking for ideas for  
virtual classes — either ideas for classes that you  
would like to see offered, or for classes that you  
would volunteer to present as part of the curric-  
ulum. Please send any ideas you may have to  
committee chair James Bornemann at [Jbornemann229@gmail.com](mailto:Jbornemann229@gmail.com).

# Don't Panic!

*Monthly musings by  
Chuck Goddeeris*



It's a new year and there is new hope for theatres. Vaccines are being released, as efficiently as the government will allow and Michigan will slowly open the rest of its industries as the vaccine rollout improves.

This gives us plenty of hope to see that theatre and live events may start to resume some normalcy at some point this year. This means, if you haven't already, we'll have to re-evaluate our cleaning and safety procedures and possibly re-configure our audience arrangements to implement physical distancing.

But tell me something you don't already know, right? That's why you're here reading this article. You need help, advice, counsel of some sort to help you through these next 3-6 months. And hopefully I can provide you with some guidance.

First, make sure you have cleaning and safety procedures written down and in place. Much like any of your theatres other administrative tasks and processes, NOW is the time to document them, review them and make sure they are accessible to multiple people.

Second, make sure you have the cleaning supplies necessary to ensure the safety of your thespians, staff, volunteers, patrons, etc. Hand sanitation stations, plexiglass shields, and disposable masks will soon become regular sights at many events and I have no doubt most community theatres will (and should) implement these, even if they aren't required. Make sure you budget accordingly and realize this may impact how much you can spend on your shows moving forward.

Last, but certainly not least, make sure you set SMART goals for your organization. They should be Specific, Measurable,

Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. Unless you are operating on a big budget (and you know who you are) then most of your goals moving forward should be focused on getting your theatre through the next 12-18 months without going under completely.

For many, that time frame of 12-18 months will cover the end of the fiscal year interrupted by the pandemic and take you into hopefully the first full fiscal year where we can trend back up toward full audience capacity. Utilizing the SMART tactics above you will want to keep financial goals reasonable: in most cases breaking even will be great, but don't get upset if you lose money overall this first season. Just make sure you do everything in your power to minimize those losses and set your organization up for future success.

What this means is hopefully you've all taken a step back to analyze how your seasons, shows, and events do financially and how you can approach those budgets to make sure you are more financially solvent. Ideally, you've identified areas where you may have been overspending or not getting enough bang for your buck and come up with new plans to maximize the money you spend.

I would suspect your advertising methods will evolve quite considerably this next year. Most likely by spending less on ads or at least making sure you target the right demographics that will be able to attend shows. You can hopefully compensate for those concerns by ensuring those involved are sharing events regularly on their social media, as well as with their friends, family and coworkers. I have no doubt many will flock back to the theatre when it is safe for them to do so, but it is even more important now than ever that what you do is intentional (aka with purpose) and has a SMART plan behind it.

So if you start making your theatre's comeback plans now with a few of these ideas in mind, I think you will be on your way to a more successful, fulfilling and safe year back in the theatre you love so much.





The Sauk presented *Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus: A Radio Play* for four performances in December. The production was presented live with the actors performing in their own homes. The production was produced using Streamyard. The Sauk also produced Mark Dunn's *Beles* this way in June 2020. Although these two productions are no longer available for viewing, Sauk Executive Director Trinity Bird said he would be willing to help any theatre explore the Streamyard platform. He can be reached at [thesauk.hct@gmail.com](mailto:thesauk.hct@gmail.com). Streamyard was also used for four weeks of new play readings and interactive talkbacks with the playwrights in May. These may be viewed at [www.thesauk.org/pid.html](http://www.thesauk.org/pid.html). Pictured are Jeff Gray, Ellie Gray, Mandeel Leigh Howard and Tyson Duff as the O'Hanlon Family in *Yes Virginia*.



## Meet your Board of Directors (*virtually, of course!*)

The CTAM Board of Directors has recently released a video introduction on Facebook. This video, which introduces all of our current board members, is the first of many that the board plans to release as a way to interact more with our affiliates using social media. Check out

CTAM's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityTheatreAssociationofMichigan> and stay tuned to all of our social media platforms for more information about CTAM activities and programs.

If you want to find out more about serving on the Board of Directors, please notify CTAM Administrator Mary Jo Denolf (pictured here!) at [ctamthrives@gmail.com](mailto:ctamthrives@gmail.com).





***Your Affiliate or Individual CTAM dues for fiscal 2021 are due now! Our fiscal year began on August 1, so to remain current, your dues are due, so to speak!***

***Check out the website for application forms and more information about all the great benefits of membership!***

## **Lakeshore Alliance theater equipment available**

Lakeshore Arts Alliance (around Saugatuck) is closing their doors and has a lot of theatre equipment available to other groups that might have a need.

In addition to lights, sound and other stage equipment, there are 100s of feet of light and sound cable and extension chords, daisy chain cable and 3-dimmer pacs. Most of the equipment and props have been in storage for more than five years and will need some cleaning up.

“Lakeshore Arts Alliance is a 501(c)(3) organization, and I know many of us are struggling during this time. We are willing to let you to take the equipment and put it to use whenever you want to, so that you can be ready when things lighten up. If you are a non-profit, we are willing to donate it. We ask that if you sell the equipment, you consider making a donation to the LAA,” according to John Huyge.

Interested? Contact John at [jrhuygeassociates@comcast.net](mailto:jrhuygeassociates@comcast.net). Phone 616-836-4245 (cell) or home at 269-857-2613.



## **Grand Rapids resumes youth classes**

On January 16, 2021, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre (GRCT) began our first in-person classes in nearly a year! The excitement from students, parents, staff, and faculty electrified the air in rehearsal rooms and hallways that have stood empty since March 13, 2020. GRCT is offering 18 in-person classes, and 3 online classes for Winter Term, including acting, musical theatre, costumes & props, improvisation, sketch comedy, dance, and playwriting.

Working with the Kent County Health Department, GRCT staff have implemented COVID procedures to keep our 172 Winter Term students & faculty safe. All students & faculty must complete an online health screening before class, have their temperatures taken, maintain a 6 foot distance from one another, and of course wear masks at all times (including singer's masks made by our staff costume designer and volunteers). GRCT staff and volunteers clean/sanitize all rooms between classes, have marked 6 foot distances with spike tape in the classrooms, and use fans in open doors to encourage air flow before, during, and after classes. Video Orientation replaced in-person orientation, and all classes are prepared to move to zoom at any point in the term, should conditions warrant. We've also staggered class times, reduced class sizes, and limited building entry to ONLY students, faculty and staff.

It was a glorious return to theatre magic, and an important reminder of the pivotal role that the arts play in our communities.



# The Scoop on Scripts

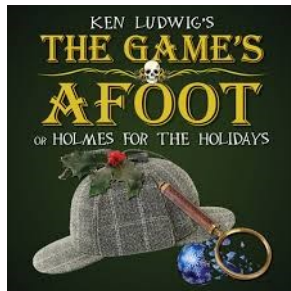
By Tara Western



Welcome to 2021. An inauspicious start to say the least, but let's be positive and hope that community theatre will flourish once again.

Ken Ludwig's *The Game's Afoot or Holmes for the Holidays* ©2012 was the Edgar Award Winner for Best Mystery Play. Published by Concord The-

atricals, we find Broadway star, William Gillette, hosting a Christmas Eve party at his Connecticut castle. Gillette is world renowned for playing Sherlock Holmes and at times he seems to believe he *is* Holmes. The

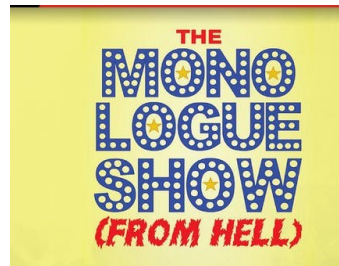


first brief scene is from a Sherlock play: Holmes (Gillette) shoots Moriarity, then, during Gillette's curtain speech he is shot. Quickly, the dust covers are removed and the set becomes Gillette's glamorous living room. Swords and pistols are displayed; a Christmas tree sits in a corner. Set: a door to hallway stage right, a staircase leads to a landing stage left, French doors up center, doors lead to the dining room, and a library closet—a very important closet. Gillette's mother, Martha (mid 70s) appears, then handsome Gillette (40s) with a sling on his arm. It is early afternoon, Christmas Eve 1936. Mother and son greet guests: Aggie and Simon (mid 20s) and Felix and Madge (40s). The ensemble sets up the plot by discussing the weapons, the recording system, the murder of a stage hand, the shooting of Gillette and the quick marriage of Aggie and Simon. A bookcase that becomes a complete bar with a pull of a lever is shown. Immediately after glamorous, snarky Daria Chase arrives everyone's animosity toward her is aired. Soon, she has insulted everyone. During a séance (don't we all have a séance on Christmas Eve?), Daria is stabbed.



In Act II, Inspector Goring (female) arrives; therefore, the cast attempts to hide the body, dragging it to and fro, putting it in the revolving bar etc. Some excellent farcical moments occur at top speed, of course.

Playscripts' *The Monologue Show (from Hell)* by Don Zoldis ©2016 is an 80-90-minute comedy set in a high school. It's a perfect vehicle for these pandemic/virtual times, as no set is required. All actors are on stage and step forward when it is their turn. Also, the 32 monologues can be performed by 30 actors or one. Monologues can be omitted, shortened, and the



roles can be played by any gender, race or ethnicity. The narrator/teacher of this high school class, Mr. Banks, can be the director or teacher of the cast. The monologues vary in

length and student attitude. Near the middle of the play, Mr. Banks tells Todd, who touts himself as a human cannonball, (shooting out of his mother's womb breaking a wall), that the assignment was to be personal, truthful, and reflecting events that really happened. Other topics of note: a failed McDonald's interview, a pornographic fan fiction *Star Wars Episode 6 1/2*, a self-help DVD series pitch, a plan to get J. K. Rowling to write more Harry Potters, especially *Harry Potter and the Divorce Attorney of Doom*, and how to win a spelling bee through mental domination. A mixture of style is apparent as Angel acts out a lobotomy, and when two girls fight for their turn, one adds unwelcome sound effects (barking). Then there's Tara's (!) Hollywood audition, complete with her headshot and dramatic recorded music, and using the rest of the cast for sound effects as she dramatizes a scene, even chastising them when they mess up. An ongoing battle between Caleb and London heats up at the end with other students, chiming in with their opinions, frustrating Mr. Banks to no end. This is fun endeavor. Even at my age, I'd love to perform some of these monologues..... especially Tara's.