

CUELINES



April/May 2020

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Newsletter of the Ohio Community Theatre Association
www.ohiocommunitytheatre.org

From OCTA STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

It is with great regret that we announce the cancellation of the 2020 OCTA Regionals, OCTA Jr., and the OCTA State Conference 2020.

The COVID-19 situation posed new challenges, both in terms of safety and logistics, to our regionals, OCTA, Jr and OCTA State Conference and the decision to cancel was made after great deliberation by the OCTA State Board and Regional Reps. Our ability to guarantee a healthy environment for our participants throughout the experience was of primary importance in this decision. Even though the actual events are months away and the landscape is still very uncertain, the safety issues of rehearsal spaces, live performances, audience social distancing, hotel, and buffet meals indicate cancellation as the wisest course for this year.

Participation in any OCTA event is an experience that cannot be replaced, and we are saddened that we cannot provide that opportunity for our participants and member theatres this year. Plans are already being made for the OCTA 2020-2021 Season.

On behalf of the entire OCTA State Board and our Regional Representatives, thank you for your continued interest and support of OCTA and our programs. We depend on your membership and participation to make OCTA a viable organization for community theatre participants across the state of Ohio to not only have educational opportunities, but also to receive recognition for their efforts on and off the stage.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact President Joe Barton @ jbarton22@msn.com.

Break-a-leg to all our member theatres as we begin to re-open our theatres and tread the boards once again!

Warm regards,
Joe Barton
OCTA President

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Save the Dates:

- October 17, 2020
More details to come in Cuelines about a one night OCTA get together Food, Good Friends, a few awards, and Plans to Reveal the 2021 Conference theme.
- July 25, 2020 - Board meeting via Zoom

- September - Executive Retreat - TBD
- October 16-18, 2020 - Board Retreat
- October 17, 2020 - Banquet - Cherry Valley
- December 5, 2020 - Board Meeting
- January 16, 2021 - Board Meeting
- March 20, 2021 - Board Meeting
- May 15, 2021 - Board Meeting
- July 17, 2021 - Board Meeting
- September 3-6, 2021 - Annual Conference

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| Ray Lebowski | 3rd Vice President |
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MM/PR: Planning vs. Reality

from Mendell Hibbard

Hello everyone! The MM/PR division (marketing, membership and public relations) has been quite busy laying the groundwork for some "face time" with our member theatres. Plans were developed and now we have an updated OCTA brochure to give to the membership and potential new theatre members. The brochures were completed and the members of the MM/PR division were ready to begin the project of visiting every member theatre this year.

All was moving along nicely until the weather forced us to cancel the January State Board meeting (where we were going to unveil the new brochure). Then, the coronavirus event reared its ugly head which put a stop to any type of gatherings, including any theatre business meetings. And here we are riding out the storm like everyone else.

We don't know when we will get the opportunity to visit you -- it may have to wait until this fall. It remains our intent to attend one of your regular business meetings (either at your individual theatre or your regional delegate meeting). Our goal is for every member theatre to put a name and a face to a State Board member in addition to the regional representatives. We plan on having the OCTA brochure in our hands to distribute to our members. It describes the many programs that OCTA sponsors and we encourage the member theatres to take advantage of all that OCTA provides.

It's a run for the races...

from Christi Thomas

This COVID-19 seems to have its grip on everyone and AACTFest 2021 is no different. AACT has decided AACTFest 2021 will be by invitation, thus allowing all the states and Regions to cancel their festivals.

The basic idea is that any theater may submit an application to do an excerpt between July and October (an excerpt is 60 minutes with 10 minutes to set up and 10 minutes to tear down). An AACT committee will choose 25 shows from those submitted and send out two adjudicators to see your excerpt between November 1 and March 31. From those 25 shows they will narrow down the field to 12 and those 12 will be invited to Louisville for the national festival (June 14-19, 2021).

The specific guidelines will be coming out in June and all your questions will be answered (i.e. do we have to be an AACT member to submit or does the show have to be a part of our current season?) and I will have a contact to help with any other questions. I do know that if you are chosen to go to Louisville, you will be helped a bit with funds from AACT. Watch for more info on the OCTA website soon!



March Division Reports

Administrative Division – Susan Barzda reported that the Admin Division had four members present via ZOOM on March 21. Copies of proposed changes to four Admin division policies were emailed to the board members and regional reps so they can review them before voting on them. We decided to defer voting on the changes until the May meeting. The Hall of Fame nomination form has been updated and needs to be placed on the OCTA website. Division members also reviewed an Executive board motion that will be raised later in today's meeting. The division has decided to wait until the May 16 meeting before deciding on whether changes need to be made in the procedures for the Spirit of Community Spirit Award, the Hall of Fame Award, Community Theatre Month in June, and Board Elections due to the Coronavirus pandemic. An online vote was taken by the board as a motion and a second from the MMPR Division to accept the River City Players for membership in OCTA. They paid the \$65 fee, and were formerly members. There were 16 board members and 7 regions voting yes; there were 3 abstentions, and no "no" votes, so the motion passed. -- Susan Barzda, Secretary and Admin Division Chair

Fundraising Division- Jai Furlong Pierce reported that the Fundraising division is working on a Christmas in July Fundraising event with Santa using Robert Weidle as Santa to request donations for OCTA. They are also asking for personal monetary contributions to be made to OCTA. Jai has requested a roll of stamps to use for the patron mailings. Aara Wise will get him a roll. - Jai Furlong Pierce, 3rd Vice President and Fundraising Division Chair

MMPR Division- Mendell Hibbard reported his division discussed other issues. He requested that he be given copies of all applications for membership so his division could collect the necessary information about the theatres. He reported that Cuelines is accessible to anyone via our website, so anyone who wants to read Cuelines or print Cuelines can do so from our website. Christi Thomas needs information for Cuelines, so please send her things to post and articles. Dawna Kornick requested a certificate congratulating Hudson Players on their 75th Anniversary mailed to them. Aara will send it to them. —Mendell Hibbard, 2nd Vice-President, MMPR Division Chair

Programming Division- Jesse Bernal reported that his division discussed regionals, dates, conference, and options that could be made if the social distancing and meeting restrictions continue through this spring or summer. Dan Maloney reported on the progress of the 2020 State Conference and possible workshops that are being scheduled. There is one from a professional vocalist on using correct vocal techniques; one on Authentic Aging using wigs and makeup (with makeup kits for sale); an L.A. actress will present a workshop on Auditioning; and a workshop on Unarmed Stage Combat will be planned. Other workshops may include information on playwriting, marketing and finance, sexual harassment and codes of conduct. Regional packets will be posted on the website, and emailed to theatres and delegates. The forms are not fill-able. Some regional entry forms may be available. The SW region is moving to google forms, like a survey. Dan will get Aara information from Amanda regarding the hotel. Adjudicators are asked if they are willing to work for free. \$50 is the maximum fee for regionals. Responders need to be paid to deduct their mileage. Contact Dawna Kornick and / or Robert Weidle regarding responder fees. —Jesse Bernal, 1st Vice-President, Program Division Chair

Welcome New Theaters

River City Players
New Albany Community Playhouse

River City Players

from Julie Howard on March 30

Her braces-filled smile is beaming as she walks into the audition room, nervous, even though she knows all of the people in the room. Auditioning is hard, so she has practiced her song for days. Some of the kids in the waiting room were new faces, some friends, and they seemed nervous too. One boy was auditioning for the first time ever. The show will be so much fun no matter what role she is assigned, but still, she wipes her sweaty palms on her jeans and takes a deep breath to sing, hoping for one of the roles she circled on the sheet. It won't matter though. Once the show is ready to raise the curtain, all that will matter is that she is performing with old and new friends together, and that they will do exactly as they have been rehearsing for months in front of a packed house.

Unless it all goes away...which is what has happened in the past few weeks for theater folk as the need to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and has shut down theater productions just about everywhere. Sweaty palms at auditions, rehearsals, set building, tech plans, tickets purchased, all of the things that we love and work for... on hold. For our young performers, I felt particularly heartbroken. They had all been through the audition process, being brave and strong, and stepped out of their comfort zones to read, and sing, and talk to us. Really, that's the hardest part, the most un-fun part, only to have the best parts yanked away by social distancing. How do I tell them that even though they were cast, and even as school is canceled, and libraries, and sports teams, and church groups, and lessons, and all their activities are gone, the show will not go on. Well, I won't. I can't tell them that.

As director of Peter Pan Jr. for River City Players in Meigs County, Ohio, I decided to reach out to a Facebook group for kids' theater directors; "What do I do? And how do I do it?!" Within minutes (yes, minutes), I was chatting with a man from Hong Kong who directs students remotely in the Philippines using online conferencing and sharing tools. Wow! I immediately knew that Peter Pan Jr. was, again, a "GO"! After an enthusiastic meeting with our Musical Director, Amy Perrin, we were all in. We delivered scripts via porches, socially distanced drop-off, and mail; sent the rehearsal tracks via email and set a date for our first ever virtual rehearsal via Zoom Cloud Meetings.

I am happy to report that our first rehearsal was a success! We had almost our entire cast on the session as we went through some Zoom etiquette and formalities. Each actor was able to take the floor for introductions before we moved on to the read-through. Lots of smiles and laughs. Lots of old friends meeting new ones. The wonderful, serendipitous questions from curious and creative young minds, and leadership and encouragement from our veteran cast members. It did not hold the same electricity or physicality of an in-person rehearsal, but we felt the warmth, energy, and connection we all love about being with our theater families.

Will the show go on in June as scheduled? We just don't know. We have an alternate date late in the summer, but to be honest, it's not what matters right now. What matters is that we are feeling the love of our theater friends. We're feeling the exhilaration of a productive rehearsal. We're learning and growing and making something wonderful together! I cannot wait to see how this production unfolds. It will not be like anything that we have ever done before, and I know, I just know, that once these kids take the stage, our cast, crew, and audiences will experience a play that they will never forget!

Looking for a few good Volunteers

The OCTA Board of Directors are looking for a volunteer or volunteers to chair the 2022 Annual Conference and future conferences. If you are interested, let a board member know. Not sure what a conference chair does? Join the 2021 steering committee for a look at what it takes to plan and execute this large annual event. To volunteer for the steering committee contact Gladys Haney or Aara Wise at octa1953@gmail.com.

Community theatre and local school Relations – do they exist?

I'm Mendell Hibbard, and I'm one of the OCTA board vice presidents. I'm also a member of the Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA), and I intend to present a learning session at their state conference. I need your input to do this.

My topic concerns the relationship between a community theatre and a local school system. Does one exist? Is there a child's program at your theatre? Do you share space? Do you share resources? Do you share directorial/management issues? Do you not speak to them at all?

All these are legitimate questions to me. Schools have the task of producing shows with limited budgets and talent (sound familiar?). It seems to me that both programs are doing the same thing, only with different individual circumstances. I'm looking to discover whether or not we can or will help each other out.

Now, here is where YOU come in. Can you PLEASE send me some information about what your theatre is doing and NOT doing in cooperation with the local school system? If the answer to that is "We aren't doing anything with the schools," that's fine – I just need to know that. Is there a relationship with the school theatre? Is there a relationship with individuals in the school theatre? Do you share space/set/costume/ etc.? Does the school treat the community theatre like it's got the plague?

Please email me at hibbardm@ohiodominican.edu with your responses which will remain anonymous. THANK YOU for your consideration and feedback – I'll write another article after the session is over and tell you about how things went.

Other OCTA News

Just because the Pandemic has forced the cancellation of our festivals it doesn't mean that OCTA's other services have been sidelined. The Script Library is available with many titles for perusal. Check out the website for a list of all the scripts OCTA has to lend.

The Speaker's Bureau is available for in-person or electronic meetings to share OCTA with your theater. As well as, answer those questions your theater always wanted to know.

Watch the OCTA website, www.octa1953.org, for logo items that can be purchased. Some items won't be returning, so get yours while still available.

As a member of the American Association of Community Theaters (AACT), member theatres of OCTA can take advantage of the many webinars that are being sponsored by the AACT. Some of the topics being covered are: Aging Make-up, How to Deal with Cancelling your Show in the Pandemic, To Stream or Not to Stream; that is the Question, Fundraising, How to Restart your Theater in this New World, and many more. Go to www.aact.org to see the times they are being offered and to sign up. It's free!

We would still like to remember those thespians that have left us this year. Please forward pictures to octa1953@gmail.com to be included in the 2019-2020 "In Memoriam." Look for it to be posted on the website in the Fall.

It's not too late to submit a Hall of Fame nomination for induction into the 2020 Hall of Fame. Applications can found on the website. Deadline is July 1.

Brochures, Websites, and Newsletters can still be submitted for judging during for the 2019-2020 year. Deadline to enter is July 18. All entry forms are on the OCTA website under the title Festivals and Forms.



Artists Collaborative Theatre—Kentucky

Wayne Kirsch reports that back at the end of January, a community theatre in Southeastern Kentucky suffered a fire that totally destroyed their theatre. Artists Collaborative Theatre in Elkhorn City, Kentucky had called that building their home since 2008. Inspectors have not been able to get into the smoldering remains to determine the actual cause, but it is suspected that an electrical spark in a wall may have started the fire.

The theatre produces six shows a year with 16 performances each. It is their intent to continue with this year's season being offered space in the City's community center, the local school, and UPike's local campus. Plans are to rebuild the venue as soon as they can. Donations are extremely welcomed, both money and physical items. Articles and videos are available to be viewed on the theatre's Facebook page. We all know theatres who have gone through similar disasters and have come through it with the help of our theatre communities. Please keep Artists Collaborative Theatre in your prayers and help them if you can. (from an email dated February 1)



Gone, but maybe not forgotten!

Cuelines is published online five times per year as the official newsletter of the Ohio Community Theatre Association. Material for publication should be submitted by the third Monday of January, March, May, and October, and by December 10, and will be printed as space permits. Send Callboard listings to both the Newsletter Editor and Webmaster. Submissions without names will not be published.