

CUELINES



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

A Note from Joe

Greetings to all. It's been a rough few months for community theatre in the State of Ohio especially our OCTA member theatres. With this writing, I hope that your theatre is researching new and/or different ways to perform in your respective region.

On July 24, I was able to catch a show by Maumee Valley Civic Theatre in Napoleon, Ohio (NW Region). I was excited to see how this would be accomplished and was delighted at the results. Working with the Henry County Health Department, they were able to perform *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* as a socially distanced event on the lawn of their theatre. A temporary stage was erected with a sound system and a few lights (although mother nature provided most of the lighting). The audience was socially distanced on the lawn and our temperature was taken as we entered, and the audience was asked to bring their own lawn chair or blanket. As an audience, we were asked to be masked when not eating a snack or having a drink. Like many in attendance, I was overjoyed just to be seeing live theatre again, so the mask was a small ask to see LIVE theatre! The cast members were all mic'd and that added a lot to the success of the show as the sound, overall, was excellent. Each member of the cast also used a face shield while on stage and many of the main characters took this as an opportunity to decorate them for their specific character. Because of the limitation of space on the stage, the lawn was used to create levels throughout the show. I was amazed at how many set changes they were able to incorporate in such an untraditional space all while using large props and set pieces. It was quite an undertaking and the folks at MVCT made it look flawless!

Although I did not see it live, I was also excited to hear that the Toledo Rep (NW) was also able to present *The Crucible* as an outdoor performance. Director Julie Zatzko explained that they worked with the Lucas County Health Department to follow social distancing guidelines throughout rehearsal, had all their rehearsals outside and all performers always used a mask. Seating was limited by Lucas County Health Department, but they were able to live stream the event and sell tickets on-line. Mother Nature did make an appearance and one of their performances had to be delayed, but otherwise the Rep was able to make theatre happen.

I use both theatres as an example of ingenuity in our current COVID Pandemic Climate. Of course, each theatre must make the decision for itself whether the risk is worth the reward, but for those theatres looking to get "back on stage," there is hope! By working with their respective county health departments, both the Rep and MVCT were able to create an atmosphere where their participants and their audience felt comfortable and were acceptable to health department guidelines. Not all health departments are the same, I realize this, but by making the commitment to do live theatre each of them worked with authorities to get "back on stage."

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At our most recent Board Meeting, I heard from various board members about theatres all over Ohio producing shows in new venues in order to social distance, live streaming shows (with permission of the publishing house, of course) and even doing on-line performances specifically written for that medium. All in all, I was excited to hear of all the innovative ways OCTA member theatres are working with their local health departments/local governments and getting back on stage!

Hopefully, this article gave you and your theatre some hope that community theatre is becoming active once again and gave some guidance or example as to how to work with local health/government authorities to do so. I would be excited to hear about your theatre and how each of them is able (or allowed) to produce a show once again. As I stated earlier, not all theatres are comfortable with opening/producing a show at this current time and I respect that decision. But, if you are finding new ways to re-open and get “back on stage,” I would be interested in hearing about it. As always, you can contact me at my email jbarton22@msn.com. I would like to know what is happening at your theatre. We are all searching for answers and by working together, we can get community theatre “back on stage” in Ohio once again!

Warm regards,
Joe Barton
OCTA President

AACT in Louisville 2021...

from Christi Thomas

AACTFest 2021 will be by invitation, thus all the state and Regional festivals were canceled for this cycle. The basic idea is that any theater may submit an application between July and October to do an excerpt (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). Early bird registration begins September 1 and you can book your hotel room now.



The specific guidelines can be found at <https://aact.org/aactfest-2021>. I will have a contact to help with any questions. I do know that if you are chosen to go to Louisville, you will be helped a bit with funds from AACT.

July Division Reports

Administrative Division – Susan reported the division met and selected those who are to be inducted into the 2020 Hall of Fame. They are also working on the Annual Delegate Meeting and in which format it will be held. --*Susan Barzda, Secretary and Admin Division Chair*

Fundraising Division – Ray reported that they discussed the scholarship winners and Patrons and various other fundraising ideas. —*Ray Lebowski, 3rd Vice President and Fundraising Division Chair*

MMPR Division - Mendell Hibbard reported his division continues to work on maintaining and updating the Anniversary List and Resource Directory. They also reviewed three policies. —*Mendell Hibbard, 2nd Vice-President, MMPR Division Chair*

Programming Division - Jesse reported that his division talked about changing the rules for OCTAFest 2021 to be more like AACTFest rules. The 2021 OCTA Conference theme reveal may be done by video. There are people interested in Chairing the 2022 Conference. They are waiting on the Governor's guidelines for theatrical performances. —*Jesse Bernal, 1st Vice-President, Program Division Chair*

Regional Reports

Central—There is a meeting scheduled in August. The two new Reps agreed to stay on for the next year and plan on sending an email to introduce the themselves to the Central theaters. —*Sue Rapier, Central Regional Rep*

East—East region is using Facebook Messenger to send out info. Various theaters are doing on-line reminiscing and sharing history about their theater or doing youth theater camp workshops. Most theaters have put their seasons on hold. —*Christy Rahrig, East Regional Rep*

North—The North region has not met since the pandemic hit. They are still holding fundraisers with the sale of raffle basket tickets and candles. Contact Jason Chandler at 419-617-6881 if you'd like to buy a candle. —*Deb Wentz, North Regional Rep*

Northeast—The Northeast Reps would like to stay on. All theaters in the region are still closed although two theaters are trying to hold a show, but have to follow state and county guidelines. —*Dawna Kornick, reporting for the Northeast.*

Northwest—The Northwest Reps communicate via Facebook. They plan on applying the funds paid to Owens Community College to next year's OCTAFest. Several groups are doing shows online. Some theaters were not permitted to do shows and were shut down. —*Brittany Kupresanin, Northwest Regional Rep*

Southeast—The Southeast Region held their delegates meeting on June 27 at Chillicothe Civic Theatre. Delegates wore masks and followed social distancing. Those in attendance shared what their theaters have been doing. —*Frances Gibser, Southeast Regional Rep*

Southwest—The Southwest Region held a Virtual Awards Ceremony via YouTube on June 20. Spirit of Community Theater Awards were handed out. Most shows have been postponed or theaters are doing virtual productions. —*Kevin Noll, Southwest Regional Rep*

West—Christi and Niccole will continue as Reps. Most theaters have postponed their productions. —*Christi Thomas, West Regional Rep*

Conference Theme Hint:

Think *Death of a Salesman*, *Rent*,
Les Miserables or *Little Mermaid*

September 12, 2020 - Board Meeting via Zoom
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

How to Successfully Perform Little Women Amidst a Global Pandemic...and other lessons we learned during the summer of 2020.

We, as a production team, submitted the Thomas Hischak adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's book "Little Women," to the play reading committee of Zanesville Community Theater (ZCT) in the spring 2019. A year ago, we had visions of a grand set, a large cast, and the ability to perform inside the theater. We were fine with whatever time slot we were given if chosen, because we knew the theater was temperature controlled and costumes would not be an issue. Then 2020 hit...hard. Spring of 2020 brought with it a new way of living, a new way of viewing the world, and new levels of expectations for health and safety that completely changed how our show, if there was going to be one, had to look. The Board of ZCT already had to make the difficult decision to cancel one show and postpone another. We were given the task of presenting a plan for our show that would honor the health needs of the community, while still allowing for the arts to continue. What we did: Auditions: There could not be auditions in the traditional sense due to social distancing. The production team met and our director, Reanna Warne, had already decided that she wanted to do virtual auditions. Our assistant director, Val Gahagan, set up a separate gmail specifically for *Little Women* and then set up a google sheet for audition information that was emailed out and they then had people send audition videos to the email. We were completely able to cast the show based upon the videos and actually discovered actors were able to show more of their talents and personality in the videos. This allowed us to cast people who had never been on the stage before and others who hadn't been on stage in years. Rehearsals: Due to the shelter in place mandates and social distancing needs, we could not have face to face rehearsals in the beginning. Our producer, Angel Palmer, bought a subscription to Zoom, so we used it as a means to do our read through, and then our rehearsals for a month before the limits were lifted and we could start working in small groups of 10 or less. While Zoom worked well for the read through, it was a bit of a challenge for the actual rehearsals due to connectivity issues for some of the cast members.

We were very grateful when the cast was able to start working in small groups. We found that to be very effective because they were able to really work on the details of the smaller scenes. When the restrictions were further lifted and we were allowed to start working with the whole cast, we were in a great place as far as lines and character development and we feel this added to the success of the show. During each step of the rehearsals, we encouraged distancing and mask wearing. Our goal was to put on a great show and keep the arts moving...while also keeping our cast safe. Performance Space: Performing inside of a building was not going to be possible due to the constraints of social distancing. One of the first things our directors agreed upon was the idea of doing the show in a park. The whole production team had gone to see different Shakespeare in the Park productions and loved the idea of recreating that with *Little Women*. However, we also agreed that by moving the show outside, in the July heat, we needed to drop the performances down to only one weekend and drop the matinee. We began to research different park venues, but most of them were closed due to the pandemic. The ones that were open were not large enough to accommodate a cast of 18 and an audience safely, or they didn't have the electricity we needed to run the sound and lights. Two of our cast members were brothers and their family owned a large amount of land that had a pavilion on it. It was close to town, had electricity, and was large enough that we could easily build a set that would allow for space for the cast members, as well as give ample seating for the audience members that would ensure social distancing. This gave birth to "Little Women on the Lawn" and we had a venue! We built our set using Eric Blake's (ZCT Board Vice-President) design. It granted a large area for each of the settings and allowed room between them. *continued on next page*

Conference Theme Hint:

It's Not Little.

Linus & Lucy

We used 2x4 posts in concrete buckets that were mobile and put a 2x2 with curtains attached to them as the backdrops. We used 4x8 flats with black curtains as the “backstage wall.” The curtains and set pieces were removed every night and set back up every day. We believe our main success came from having such a large space to work with...we were able to be outside, keep our distance, and still feel connected. While it came with it’s own set of challenges, we were able to do things outside that we would never have been able to do in a building with walls. Safety Precautions: At all times the cast, crew, and audience should feel safe in their environment. Every decision we made was with safety in mind. From changing the audition process, to modifying the rehearsal schedule, to shifting the performance space and time, it was all done understanding that each step was critical to keeping our cast healthy and our patrons safe. The cast was given three sitting areas in and around the pavilion to allow for social distancing, and we gave masks as cast gifts that they could decorate as they so pleased. We set up a ticketing system that was primarily touchless with 90% of our sales being online and asked those who had reservations to bring exact change so we were not having to exchange money. We also limited our audience size. We went with approximately 50% of what our theater could hold. That gave us some room for last minute ticket sales and would not put us in a position of having people too close to each other. We offered a limited concession area and had only one person handling that to reduce the number of people involved and help with contact tracing, and encouraged using exact change. We had masks available for any patron who wanted one. We had hand sanitizer everywhere backstage, on the concession table, and in the portalets. Everyone on the production team had to be wearing a mask while working with the public, and our concessionaire also wore gloves. We helped our patrons to areas of the lawn that would allow them to sit with their parties, but be socially distant from other parties. We tried to make everyone as comfortable in the space as possible. The responses to the show were overwhelmingly positive. We were able to share our artistic vision, develop relationships, and create friendships that will last a lifetime. Most importantly, people in the community were able to get outside, get some Vitamin D, walk away from their stressors and, for a brief moment, forget about the chaos of life.

From Christy Rahrig

Conference Theme Hint:

Tamer.
I need a shave.

The **2021 Conference** is in motion and promises to be spectacular. We have a lot of fun activities planned, as well as some reappearing favorites. We are looking forward to showing everyone what OCTA has to offer. Our steering committee is hard at work preparing for the unveiling of the theme.

Let us introduce you to the steering committee assisting Co-Conference Chairs Gladys Haney and Aara Wise with Conference 2021:

Jason Neymeiyer	Amy Sullivan
Dawna Kornick	Christi Thomas
Glen Garcia	Lisa Napier-Garcia
Jane Mancini	Kathy Hyland
Thom Ogilvie	Alexis McCullough
Eugene Haney	

Look for “hints” about our conference theme in this newsletter

The Apple City Players did a Virtual Play called “10 Ways to Survive Life in a Quarantine” by Don Zolidas this past June. We were all set to start our first production of our children’s theater in March when the theaters were all closed due to Covid. The Board began to discuss other options and the suggestion of a virtual play was discussed. Our play selection committee got together and suggested this play. I volunteered to direct the production and we had several members and past actors offer to become mentors throughout the production. We put out notifications in April through social media to hold auditions via zoom. Using Zoom meeting as our platform we were able to audition and get 16 young actors ages 14-18 to be involved in the play. Our rehearsals began in May and lasted 6 weeks. We rehearsed entirely online using the Zoom Meeting platform. I split the cast into group based on the days they were available and assigned mentors to be online for each rehearsal. We rehearsed 3 days a week for 6 weeks all online. This involved sorting out technical issues, weather events causing lost internet, and mastering camera angles and prop usage. The presentation was presented using the Zoom Webinar format as it was easier to manage the presenters (actors) and the audience. All advertising was presented online, cable tv sponsors, and articles in the local papers. Our license only allowed for one live showing, which was disappointing but we promoted a one-time LIVE performance. I did record the performance and each of the cast members and mentors were able to obtain a copy for personal use, with the stipulation that it would not be used in social media. Our performance was held on June 27, 2020 via Zoom and a live streaming to Facebook which was offered on both the Markay Theater FB Page and the Apple City Players FB page. All in all it was a great success.

OCTA Scholarships

OCTA gave away four scholarships this year. Through the generosity of our Patrons, 10% of contributions go to the scholarship fund and from funds raised by selling 50/50 raffle tickets at conferences. We also have families and friends who contribute in memory of loved ones for specific scholarships.

This year those scholarships went to:

Ashley Doyle - \$300 Patron Scholarship - Actors Guild of Parkersburg/SE

Lily Franks - \$300 Patron Scholarship - Caryl Crane Youth Theatre/North

Kayla Stroud - \$500 Michael Schacherbauer Memorial Scholarship - Acting Up & Inspiring Arts Productions/SW

Payton Van Nort - \$500 Fred Wise Memorial Scholarship - ZCT & Zane Trace Players/East

All four of these young ladies have sent their deepest Thank You's to the OCTA Scholarship program in awarding them scholarships for the 2020 year. Congratulations ladies and good luck in school!

OCTA Script Library

Got spare time on your hands? Stuck at home? Tired of reruns on TV? Consider borrowing scripts from the OCTA Script Library. We are running a special right now. Borrow 20 scripts for \$20. Whether you are planning for your next season or just want to read shows you have never read before. Then five more scripts for the regular deposit price. All you have to do is go to the website and find the library loan form. Add the additional five scripts and send it along with your deposit to the OCTA office. You have three months to read them before returning. It's a great deal!

In Memoriam

Although we are not able to have a conference this year, we still don't want to forget those that have contributed so much to the world of theater, but have left us too soon. Jesse Bernal will be putting together our annual In Memoriam video for 2020. We would like for you or your theaters to send pictures of those who have gone on to the Great White Skyway to be included in the memorial video. We would like to have it posted on our website in time for Labor Day. So be sure to indicate who the person is and what theater they are from. Send it to octa1953@gmail.com.

Suggestions Wanted

Evaluations are so important to many organizations and businesses. OCTA is no exception. We depend on you, the participants, to let us know what you like, what you don't like, and what you would like to see changed. We do read those paper and email evaluations that you take the time to fill out at regionals, annual conferences and from surveys we send out to help us plan future events. They have been especially helpful in planning what workshops you would like to see at conferences.

This year with COVID-19 sidelining everything theater, we don't have the fresh-from-conference evaluations to use in planning for the following year. So we have looked at the 2019 evaluations, but would like to hear more. If you have suggestions for workshops, events, late night games or other things you would like to see, then we want to hear from you. Would you be interested in being a workshop leader or sponsor of an event? All of this can be emailed to our steering committee to help with planning the 2021 conference. Send your suggestions to octaconference2021@gmail.com. We promise to look at and consider the feasibility of all suggestions.

Theater and “Stay at Home”

from Christi Thomas

When all this “stay at home” stuff started, I was impressed by the things I could watch or listen to on the internet. One of the first things I found was Jim Merillat doing Broadway tunes from his basement which he normally does at Marie’s Crisis on Tuesday nights. Is great seeing him in his element. He also has a Saturday show.

I found Josh Groban one day singing songs from his bathroom (for acoustics). For a while, Robert Weidle (Cincinnati) could be found singing some great songs on Facebook. You can still find Dee Fisher (Van Wert) playing the piano on Wednesdays at noon. She takes requests.

It was fun for me to finally get to see *Hamilton* on July 3. I was then curious what actors in New York were doing these days when there’s no theater. I talked with a childhood friend whose step-daughter has done shows and lives in NYC: *Cats*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Hello Dolly!* I asked him what Haley was doing these days and he jokingly said “nothing, like everyone else.” “What most, if not all, are doing is taking online voice lessons, yoga, conditioning, etc. to stay in shape for when things return to ‘normal’ and they can start again.” I can’t imagine making it to Broadway from the Midwest and then there’s no theater. Yikes!

I know from reading the other articles in this edition of *Cuelines* that some theaters are getting to do shows...some outside, some via Zoom. Please write us about your productions so we can share them with everyone.

The other day I caught the San Francisco Symphony doing the William Tell Overture. I’ve listened to it a few times because it is amazing. I know there are a lot of other amazing things to watch, especially on Playbill.com. I got a subscription to BroadwayHD.com to watch even more shows. For me, it’s trying to find the time!

Theater’s in our blood. Kinda hard to lose that.

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.