

Association of
Community
Theatres of Manitoba Inc.

ACT Manitoba

Annual Report

2015-2016

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I. Overview

A. Background & Synopsis of 2015-2016 – David Johnson

ACT continues to provide a provincial organization for Manitoba community theatres. ACT Manitoba had 21 member groups in five regions: Southeast, Southwest, Northeast, Northwest and Winnipeg.

The Board of Directors met regularly throughout the year, including four face-to-face Board meetings and three teleconferences. Two Executive meetings were also held via teleconference. The teleconferences took place primarily during the winter months and were held for both economic and safety reasons. Costs were lowered as no travel expenses were incurred and the need for Board members to travel in inclement weather was greatly reduced. Email is the main method of communication between meetings for both the Board and our members.

The ACT Website, www.actmanitoba.mb.ca, is maintained and updated regularly. All aspects of ACT are covered on the website, including its history, membership, guidelines for workshops and festivals, both past and current newsletters and links to theatre resources. This information is available for members and non-members alike.

The ACT Newsletter, *Curtain Up!*, is published twice a year. A link to the latest edition is emailed to all members once uploaded to the website. This newsletter allows the Board to keep members abreast of any issues that may arise as well as providing an update of theatrical happenings throughout the Province. Newsletter contributions from the membership are always welcome. Both the newsletter and website allow continued exchange of news and information to members and non-members alike.

A Resource List of persons available to facilitate workshops etc. is updated regularly and available through our Secretary.

ACTFest 2016 was hosted by 3rd Ave. Vagabond Theatre Company in Binscarth, MB from May 6 to 8, 2016.

The ACT Scholarship Fund provides financial assistance to any individuals of a member group who wish to further their theatrical education through non-credit theatre courses. No individuals utilized the Scholarship program during the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Due to the balance already accrued in the ACT Scholarship Fund, no additional monies were allocated to the fund in the fiscal year.

Two member groups accessed the Theatre Development Fund during the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Shoestring Theatre Co. utilized the fund for Dialect Coaching and Candlewick Productions accessed the fund for a workshop on Movement & Expression Through Movement. Due to the balance already accrued in the ACT Theatre Development Fund, no additional monies were allocated to the Fund in the fiscal year.

After talking to our insurance provider, the ACT Board initiated a review of our Insurance coverage. As a result, the Board did not renew ACT's insurance coverage with the current provider. As of the end of the fiscal year, the ACT Board was still actively pursuing new insurance proposals that would meet ACT's needs.

There were no ACT initiated Workshops during the fiscal year.

A Strategic Planning Session was held on Saturday, June 18, 2016 at Motel 6 in Brandon, MB. The session was facilitated by Cindy Parypa. Cindy brought a wealth of strategic planning experience from her various positions in the health system. The planning session started by looking at ACT MB's vision and mission statement. Cindy followed this up by walking the Board through a full study and analysis of the interactions of the ACT organization, its programs, relationship with members, relationships with others and at each step, bringing it back to the new vision and mission. By understanding ACT's Vision and Mission Statement for 2016 and beyond, the Board could look at "who we are, what we are and where do we want to go". An Action Plan was then developed based on what was shown to be the drivers of the organization. It is worthy to note that, of the eight objectives cited, communication and the marketing of ACT (both within the organization and throughout the province) proved to be the top two objectives moving forward, followed by increased member and non-member involvement.

ACT did no fundraising during the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

B. Direction for 2016 – 2017 – David Johnson

The ACT Board will continue to maintain ACT's existing services as well as promote member accessibility to theatre information. The Board is always interested in hearing from our members regarding potential new programs and services.

ACT Website: The website continues to be our main source of communication and information. Our webmaster, John Tait, is continually updating, upgrading and fine tuning the website. It is a premier place for information regarding ACT in particular and theatre in general.

Newsletter: The newsletter is an integral part of ACT and is distributed twice yearly, in June and in December, via email link to the ACT website. All members in good standing are eligible to receive this email. Rrain Prior continues to be newsletter Editor and she encourages all members to let her know what is happening in their area.

Resource List: This in an ongoing project that is updated on a regular basis. This resource list of potential facilitators and adjudicators is available upon request to all members of good standing.

ACT Festival 2017: The Festival continues to be popular with our member groups and is the highlight of all ACT's programs. It is a beacon to the strength of Manitoba's community theatre. At time of printing, however, no member group has expressed interest in hosting ACTFest 2017. In the event that no member group volunteers to host the 2017 Festival, there may be no ACTFest in 2017.

Workshops: The ACT Board is hosting a Stage Management Workshop on Saturday, September 24, 2016. This limited enrolment workshop will be facilitated by Sylvia Fisher, who has worked her craft extensively throughout Manitoba as well as across Canada. As well, if interest warrants, the ACT Board may organize other theatre workshops. The Board is open to all topic suggestions.

Theatre Development Fund: These funds are available to any member group wishing to hold its own theatre development workshop. These funds can be accessed to subsidize stand-alone workshops, workshops specific to a production or to bring in a professional to assist in a specific aspect of a production's rehearsal process.

Scholarship Fund: This program is available to individual members wishing to improve their theatrical skills. Within the parameters of the program, the fund will help subsidize tuition and other costs incurred. For the 2016-2017 fiscal year, ACT has allocated a further \$500.00 to the program.

Insurance: ACT's insurance coverage is at a crossroads. ACT has always endeavoured to offer 3rd Party Liability insurance to our member groups. As time passes, however, this coverage is proving more and more difficult to obtain. The ACT Board is still actively pursuing proposals but, as of printing deadline, no suitable 3rd Party Liability coverage has been found. Please see the Insurance page of the ACT web site for updates as they become available.

Reciprocal memberships: ACT maintains reciprocal memberships and partnerships with other provincial bodies and organizations.

Committees: On an as-needed basis, committee members are actively sought from within our membership to supplement the variety of knowledge and skills currently represented on the Board.

Fundraising: The ACT Board will be exploring the Manitoba Community Services Council's (MCSC) Bingo Grant program. During the fiscal year, the Board will study MCSC's current application parameters to determine if a successful grant application can be made.

II. Programs 2015 – 2016

A. ACTFest 2016 – Karen Martin

Vagabond Theatre in Binscarth hosted ACTFest on May 6, 7, and 8, 2016. They had 113 people registered and seven theatre groups participate; Shoestring Players and Broken Record Productions from Winnipeg, Rapid City Drama Club, Valley Stage Players from Swan River, Phoenix Players from Virden, Pinawa Players, and Vagabond Theatre Company from Binscarth.

ACTFest began Friday night with the opening ceremonies followed by the opening performance by Vagabond. The Friday night reception was catered by Arbuckle's restaurant in Binscarth and participants caught up with old friends and met some new ones.

Saturday was a full day of 5 theatre group performances and adjudications by Jon Ted Wynne, Valerie Wynne, and Jim Forsythe. The adjudicators this year brought a wealth of experience and knowledge that benefitted all who were present.

Saturday night's banquet and dance were enjoyed by all. The theme for the evening was "improv", which had everyone enjoying several hilarious "improv" activities. Arbuckle's restaurant catered the supper and no one went hungry.

The weekend wrapped up on Sunday morning with the final two performances and closing remarks. ACTFest 2016 was a success and the Vagabond Theatre Company did an amazing job of hosting the festival this year.

B. Regional Reports

Northwest – Genny Carriere

Theatre Amisk of Dauphin: Theatre Amisk presented the 3-act comedy, *Play on*, on November 19, 20, 21, 2015. They continued with a series of acting/improv classes through the winter and their spring production was a successful evening of Improv on April 15, 2016. Theatre Amisk continues to work with the Dauphin & District Allied Arts council with various projects at the Watson Arts Centre. Five of their members attended ACTFest 2016 in Binscarth.

Valley Stage Players: Four members performed *The Death of Me* by Norm Foster at ACTFest 2016. Planning now for a fall production.

Whitemud Comedy Company: They presented the annual dramatic reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in November 2015. They will be working on a dinner theatre production for the fall of 2016. They are also writing and performing an historical 'cemetery walk' for the community.

Theatre 53: No reports during the year.

Vagabond Theatre Company: Held a very successful ACTFest in May 2016, which included two of their productions, *Incident at the Poseidon* and *Grace*.

Thompson Playhouse: They performed *Polter-Heist* for a dinner theatre for 150 people in April 2016.

Southeast – Cathy McGrath

Candlewick Players: Is a very active company. They did a number of performances throughout the year and their company includes a youth component. They worked in collaboration with a number of other companies and toured multiple performances throughout the region. Their website is www.candlewick.ca.

Flatlands Theatre Company: Performed *Pith!*, *Anne of Green Gables* and *Diary of Anne Frank* during the season. They also ran student classes that culminated in a student performance of *The Wizard of Oz*. Their website is www.flatlandstheatre.com.

Prairie Players: Toured *A Little Christmas Spirit* by Pat Cook.

Pine Creek Players: Performed *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Their website is www.prairieplayers.ca.

Haystack Productions: No report was submitted.

Southwest – Dustin DeSchutter

7-Ages Productions: Performed Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, a Greek tragedy in November 2015. They presented the RMTTC traveling show, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, in February 2016. They also performed *Oliver* the musical in May 2016 and *Oedipus the King* in July 2016 at the Fringe.

Phoenix Players: Did 2 small plays by G. Baker, a member of the club in March 2016.

Minnedosa Drama Club: No report was submitted.

Rapid City Drama Club: Performed *Office Hours* by Norm Foster for their annual dinner theatre in November 2015. They also attended ACTFest 2016 in Binscarth and performed *The Mouse and the Raven* by Tim Kelly.

Pinawa Players: Performed *Dixie Swim Club* by J. Jones, N. Hope and J. Wooten in November 2015 as part of a dinner theatre. They also held their annual Christmas Carol Sing and Punch/Snacks in December 2015. They attended ACTFest 2016 in Binscarth and performed *The Dumbwaiter* by Harold Pinter.

Winnipeg – Ron Blicq

Shoestring Players: Our only production this season was our entry of *Confusions* in the RMTTC Ayckbourn master playwright festival in February 2016. The play consists of six self-contained but loosely connected vignettes that explore aspects of the human condition (especially, but not exclusively, gender and marital relationships). Our seven productions were all well attended and *Confusions* was positively reviewed by the critics. We then staged a truncated version (just 3 vignettes) for ACTFest 2016 in Binscarth. Regrettably, like R-G Productions, Shoestring was unlucky in the Winnipeg Fringe lottery.

R-G Productions: We performed *Relatively Speaking* for the RMTTC Ayckbourn Fest in February, and *Desdemona: A Play about a Handkerchief* in Gimli, at Theatre A-Spire in August. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in the lottery for a place at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival.

Broken Record Productions: We performed *Table Manners* at the RMTTC Ayckbourn Festival in February 2016, *Do-Overs* by Larry Hamm at ACTFest, and then *Blizzard* both in the Winnipeg Fringe Festival and for the A-Spire Summer Festival in Gimli.

A-Spire Players: Our activities in the past "theatre" year encompassed the following:

- Sep 26 – participated in Gimli's Nuit Blanc, an evening of art displays and workshops, during which we did three hourly performances of Bruce Kane's one act play *GPS - An Auto-erotic Comedy*.
- Oct 30 – A Halloween performance by our own Wisecracks Improv Comedy Group.
- November – A number of member workshops each Saturday with a different topic each week.
- Feb 12 & 13 – Our annual A-Spire Follies - a collection of short plays, skits and musical performances by various members.
- Feb to May – A series of performances by our own Wisecracks Improv comedy group the first Thursday of each month at The Ship & Plough local tavern.

- We hosted a number of musical performances by various local musicians on the last Friday of each month.
- May to Aug – Hosted the 11th Annual Summer Theatre Program, including our own presentation of *12 Hr Life* by Robert Scott.

Piper Pride Productions Inc.: No report was submitted.

C. Scholarship Fund – Karen Martin

Individual scholarships are available to members of ACT affiliated groups who have belonged to the group for a minimum of two years. Money may be set aside annually to cover these scholarships. The monies will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

The scholarship fund is offered to help cover costs incurred by ACT members as they further their theatrical education. This could be acting, lighting, sound, make-up, directing, or costume related. Any educational course, workshop or summer school which will enhance the progress of community theatre in Manitoba will be considered as appropriate to the criteria. It is not available for credits towards a post-secondary educational program.

The application and invoice will be sent to the ACT Secretary who will then forward them to all Board members for approval. Mileage may be offset at a rate of \$0.20/km to a maximum of \$100. All monies will be forwarded to the successful applicant only after the ACT Board has received copies of the original receipts verifying attendance at the event, and a report concerning the course. The invoice for an approved application will be forwarded to the ACT Treasurer who will then reimburse the applicant.

By providing these scholarships it is the intention of ACT to support community theatre in Manitoba by advancing skills development among members.

During the 2015-2016 year, the fund was not used.

D. Theatre Development Fund – Karen Martin

This fund exists to enable ACT member-groups to host educational events such as acting/directing workshops for themselves and/or others. By providing these funds, it is the intention of ACT to support community theatre in Manitoba by advancing skills development among its member-groups.

Each year, ACT may set aside funds for this purpose. Any surplus remaining at year-end may be carried forward to the following year.

To qualify for consideration for the Theatre Development Fund, the applicant must complete the Theatre Development Fund Application that is available on our Website. The application must be sent to the ACT Secretary who will then forward it to all Board members for approval.

Upon completion of the educational event, the applicant must forward the Theatre Development Fund Invoice, also available on our Website, to the ACT Secretary. With this invoice the applicant must also include original receipts verifying the actual expenses incurred, and a full anecdotal report indicating whether the workshop and/or the instructor was

successful and would be recommended to other groups. At that point, the ACT Treasurer will reimburse the applicant.

In the 2015-2016 year, the Theatre Development Fund was used by two member groups. One for Dialect Coaching and the other for Movement & Expression Through Movement.

E. Workshop Report – Karen Martin

A new workshop was introduced this year, Strategies for Writing One-Act Stage Plays. This is an on-going workshop created and facilitated by Ron Blicq. There have been two participants take advantage of this workshop this year. One participant completed a play and the other has just started. More information about this workshop can be found on the ACT website, along with the application form.

The one-day fall workshop could not be hosted this year.

F. Fundraising Report – David Johnson

ACT MB was eligible to apply for a Manitoba Community Services Council Bingo Grant. It was the decision of the ACT Board that any application be postponed till at least the next fiscal year when, based on current MCSC financial parameters, there may be a greater opportunity for a successful application.

G. Newsletter Report – Rrain Prior

Curtain Up! published two issues this year, in January and June. The newsletter continues to be distributed via and archived on the ACT website. Member news was a little thinner this year, so photos and articles made up more of the content than in previous years. The editor hopes the coming year will bring more member content back to the newsletter.

H. Website Report – John Tait

ACT established its website www.actmanitoba.mb.ca in 1996, with a mandate to provide timely information to our members about ACT Board/Group activities and to provide resources for the membership.

The ACT website is kept current through frequent updates from August to June including the newsletter, ACT Festival, group production dates, group/board contact names and links to member groups who have their own website. We also provide information on ACT Group Insurance, our history and membership. Our “Resources” page contains links to Theatre Resources, such as Winnipeg/Manitoba Professional Theatres, Grants/Funding sources, Theatre Links/Resources, Play Catalogues, On-Line Scripts, Playwright Resources, Stage Resources, and Theatre Associations as well as how to get Professional Resources for group workshops. We encourage groups/members to submit new links to web resources they have found that may be of interest to the general membership.

On our Home page, we have a link to information on the programs offered to our members; the ACT Scholarship and Theatre Development Funds. We also have links to information about Manitoba Theatre/Association Resources, such as Volunteer Manitoba Training, Manitoba Arts

Council, and ACI Manitoba, who have monthly newsletters containing information that may be of interest to groups.

We have a page providing links to University and Public Library search engines to help the membership find plays that can be borrowed through their local library using inter-Library Loan services. Members are encouraged to submit copies of plays they have produced to their local library, where they can be catalogued and become available for loan through inter-Library loans

We provide a page for “ACTing Opportunities”, which provides links to non-ACT member theatres that throughout the year post “Casting Calls/Auditions” that may give the membership additional opportunities to participate in theatre outside ACT member groups.

From our feedback, members are using the website to primarily get information about the Festival. Through communication between the website, newsletter and the Festival Host Group we will continue to ensure that information is available on a timely basis. We welcome any suggestions from our members on how to better improve the website appearance and content.

We have a “Newsletter Notification” service, where members of ACT groups can ask to be put on our Newsletter/ACT E-mail distribution list and receive important information on ACT events such as workshops, meetings, festival etc. and the availability of the newsletter. Members can join the distribution list by sending an E-mail to actman@mts.net and asking to be put on the list. We hope many more members will take advantage of this service over the coming year.

The Board can be contacted at ActMan@mts.net

We encourage members to visit the website often as information changes frequently throughout the fall and winter, and particularly to visit our “Resources” page where there is a wealth of information waiting to be discovered. The success of our site is measured by how useful you and your group find it, and we encourage your feedback.

I. Insurance – David Johnson

Wawanesa Insurance, through Guild Insurance Brokers of Brandon, has been our insurance provider since July 24, 2013. Late in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the ACT Board was informed that ACT's current policy no longer met ACT needs. For this reason, the coverage was not renewed in July of 2016 and, as of AGM Report deadline, the ACT Board was still actively researching acceptable insurance options. ACT MB's unique structure and insurance needs, as well as the need for sustainable premiums, did not allow the ACT Board sufficient time to solicit, review and put in place an acceptable alternative insurance package before the end of the fiscal year.

III. Administration Report

A. Board of Directors:

President	David Johnson
Vice-President	Judy Arnason
Treasurer	Caren Dundas
Secretary	Karen Martin
Past President	vacant
Regional Representative	Genny Carriere
Regional Representative	Cathy McGrath
Regional Representative	Dustin DeSchutter
Regional Representative	Ron Blicq
Regional Representative	vacant
Committees:	
ACT Website	John Tait
ACT Newsletter	Rrain Prior
Sponsorship	Ron Blicq
Insurance	David Johnson
Scholarship Fund	Board
Theatre Development Fund	Board
Elections	Cathy McGrath

B. Staffing – Karen Martin

ACT had no paid staff support during the 2015-2016 year. All administrative and committee work was done by Board and member volunteers.

C. Facilities, Equipment and Materials – Karen Martin

The Association, as in previous years, operated no office space, with all work being conducted from the Board members' homes. Board meetings were held in Neepawa in space provided by the Viscount Cultural Centre for the Arts (two meetings), via tele-conference (three meetings), one meeting was held in Brandon after the strategic planning session and one in Portage La Prairie prior to the AGM. Two executive meeting were also held via tele-conference. No new equipment has been added to ACT's existing complement over the last fiscal year.

IV. Financial Statements – Caren Dundas