

CURTAIN UP!

The Newsletter of the Association of Community Theatres of Manitoba

Winter 2015-16

THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING

BY RRAIN PRIOR



Karen Martin's article last summer on her first time at ACTFest made me think about the many first times for all of us in community theatre. The first time we saw a performance, first rehearsal, first time backstage, first time on-stage...the list goes on. For me this year, it was my first time directing a play—which even at about fifteen minutes was an intimidating task. (Even more so since I'd also written it and we were tweaking the script right up until the day of the first—or possibly even the last—performance.)

I've been lucky enough to be involved in very collaborative processes in my years in community theatre and film, whether I was acting, stage managing, or just taking on odd jobs where I could. There was never a time when I felt like my input was not valued or my suggestions were not taken seriously. But never before had I been the one who was guiding the process—and that, really, is the role of the director, isn't it? To be the person who has the drive to make a project actually happen, and to convince a lot of other people to jump on that crazy ride.

Being the person who is supposed to have the overall vision of the play, who everyone else in the cast and crew ultimately looks to, is a whole new challenge. You definitely learn a lot, your first time in the driver's seat. And just like with the actual motor vehicle the metaphor draws from, it can be scary on several levels. What if no one is interested in the project? How can I make the logistics work? How do I *know* if it's working? What have I forgotten? What did I not know about in the first place? Do we have lights? Do we

have a stage to work on? Is that Martian Death Flu going around the community going to hit the entire cast at once? What if I don't know all the answers? *What if we crash and burn?*

Like I said: scary. But as you take it on and dive in, you learn how to manage all of those things, and you learn how to manage the stress, and you learn how to *manage*, period. You learn how to arrange bodies for sightlines and how to tweak line readings for best effect and you definitely learn how to keep actors from tripping over things and falling off the edge of the stage.

But of everything, here is the biggest thing you learn, the One Weird Trick to ~~Direct Any Play~~ Take on Any New Role in the Theatre: the collaboration works for everyone. You don't need to know everything, and you don't need to do everything. Everyone who takes part in community theatre wants to make it work, and just like you're there to help them, they're there to help you. If the knowledge and experience you're looking for aren't available within your group, there's a thriving larger community to draw from, and resources are always available. I may not have directed a play before, but I knew I could count on and learn from those who had.

This is a big part of why I'm so excited about the new online playwriting workshop that ACT Manitoba is launching this year (see page 4 or the web site for more details). In our larger community of ACT, we have so much knowledge and experience to draw from and learn from.

I'm not sure which first is up next for me. First time in a lead role? First time running the lights? First time writing a full-length play? Whatever it is, you can be sure I'll savour the experience and I'll look to those who came before me to help me along the way.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome back to another season of theatre. Summer is grand but it is always great to know that we have our fall theatre productions to look forward to as the days get shorter.

Some of the things that have been happening in the ACT world:

- October means autumn but it also means ACT MB AGM. Including member groups represented on the ACT Board, 10 member groups will present.
- The Annual Report, which highlighted our programs for the past year, our direction for the new fiscal year and a full financial report, was presented and approved. If anyone is interested in a copy of the 2014-2015 Final Report, please contact the ACT Secretary.
- Board Elections for Executive and Area Representatives. It is great to see a new face on the Board. Welcome, Dustin DeSchutter, who is a new Area Rep. I look forward to working with you and getting to know you better. The complete election slate for 2015-2016 can be found in another section of the newsletter.
- Housekeeping amendments to the Constitution to enhance clarity of the wording. Minor stuff with some discussion before unanimous approval.
- The ACT Board and, in particular, Ron Blicq, is in the final stages of setting up an interactive **Playwriting Workshop**. This is an innovative program that Ron developed to allow him to work with his many playwright friends overseas. Distance is no longer an issue. This is exciting stuff for all playwrights in the province. Stay tuned.
- The ACT **Fall Workshop** on Stage Management has been postponed till the New Year. Logistics changed and we were unable to organize the workshop in November as originally planned.
- **Question:** When you are rehearsing, have you ever thought, "Gee, I wish I could bring in a professional to help us with blocking, with set design, with tech, with ...?" Well, YOU CAN. That is one of the things that our **Theatre Development Fund** is set up for. Use the MONEY. Check out the Theatre Development Fund on our website or con-

tact any member of the Board. ACT MB is more than just ACTFest. We are here to help you, both as a resource and as a financial aid.

- **Scholarship Fund:** See above. If you have a theatre course that you would like to go to, talk to any Board member.

Remember, the ACT Board is here to help you—if you need something, including \$\$\$, maybe we can help.

Take care and Happy Theatre!

David Johnson

ACT President

READY, SET, ACTFEST!

It was with great pleasure that the ACT Board accepted 3rd Ave. Vagabond Theatre Company's Offer to Host the 38th ACT Provincial Drama Festival, or ACTFest 2016. Vagabond hails from Binscarth/Russell and will be hosting the event at the Binscarth Theatre on May 6, 7 & 8, 2016.

This is Vagabond's second tour of duty hosting the annual Festival. They first hosted ACTFest in 2008. Vagabond did a tremendous job that year and every indication is that 2016 will be more of the same.

Stay tuned to your ACT emails and the ACT website for more information, registration timelines, etc. on ACTFest 2016.

REGIONAL REPORTS

NORTHWEST

Rep: *Genny Carriere*

Minnedosa Drama Club

No report at this time.

Rapid City Drama Club

The Rapid City Drama Club held their 22nd Annual Dinner Theatre on Nov. 5, 6, 7 performing *Office Hours* by Norm Foster. They tried something new Thursday night by providing a dessert theatre and then had the full dinner theatre experience on Friday and Saturday evening. It is still unclear as to who had more fun, the cast performing or the audience watching—a fun time was had by all!

We are now looking forward to ACTFest and in the next month or so will be gathering cast and hunting for script options.

Theatre Amisk

Theatre Amisk of Dauphin is looking forward to a busy theatre season. We are presenting the 3-act comedy, *Play On*, on November 19, 20, and 21, 2015. This is the play we presented as our ACTFest 2015 production and we are quite pleased to be able to take advantage of having workshopped the first act. As well, many of the actors involved participated in our series of acting classes, so our Director, Yvonne Lillie, and Assistant Director, Richard Purdey, are very pleased with the progress to date.

Theatre Amisk continues to work with the Dauphin and District Allied Arts Council with various refurbishment projects at the Watson Arts Centre, which is designated a Heritage Building. We made a substantial dona-

tion for the purchase and installation of new theatre curtains, and now we are looking at other improvements. We are planning to offer more acting classes this winter and may offer improv classes and a production in the spring.

Vagabond Theatre Company

Up to their ears in planning for this year's ACTFest!

The Valley Stage Players

No report at this time.

Whitemud Comedy Company

The Whitemud Comedy Company presented its annual dramatic reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in November. They are now looking towards a full-length production in the fall, and hope to have something to bring to ACTFest in the meantime.

NORTHEAST

Rep: *Dustin DeSchutter*

A-Spire Players

After a successful theatre summer, the A-Spire Players Fall Season started with its AGM on Sat. Sept. 19 followed that evening with a light dinner and a performance by Winnipeg Improv group Cross-eyed Rascals. The following weekend, the Players performed Bruce Kane's *GPS: An auto erotic comedy* several times on the evening of Sat. Sept. 26 as part of Gimli's Nuit Blanche/Cultural Day activities. *GPS* is a one-act play about a man who buys a talking car and gets more than he bargained for. On Fri. Oct. 30, the A-Spire Players' own improv group performed a Halloween Comedy Special. In No-

vember they will be conducting with a series of one-day informative seminars for their members with a new topic each Saturday including Basic Acting, Backstage Operations, Sound & Lighting and Directing. Their first major production will be the A-Spire Follies on Feb. 12 & 13, 2016, featuring evenings of vaudevillian-type skits, performances and short plays. Based on the groups mandate to support all performing arts, A-Spire Players is expanding its membership by welcoming into its association a youth group and a number of musical groups. With that and three theatrical projects currently underway, the Spring Season is shaping wonderfully

Haystack Productions

Haystack Productions is proud to present, Kim Selody's adaption of the well-loved JRR Tolkien story *The Hobbit*. Their youth company will present the show from December 1-5 at St. Paul's United Church in Beausejour. Evening shows start at 7:00 and there is a Saturday matinee at 2:00. For ticket information call 204-268-1280, or check their website:

www.haystackproductions.mb.ca

Pinawa Players

Pinawa Players is in full rehearsal mode with "Dixie Swim Club" by J. Jones, N. Hope and J. Wooten. The play will be familiar to many of our ACT Groups who have presented it in the past. The dates for the production are Wed. Nov. 18 with the play only and Nov. 19-21 for a Dinner Theatre in the Pinawa Community Centre. They are looking for a play for their spring production and hope to bring it to the Festival.

Thompson Playhouse

No report at this time.

SOUTHWEST

Rep: Linda Thomson

7 Ages

December 11th and 12th will be An Evening with Patsy Cline. That will be held at the WMCA @ 8pm

February 14th the MTS touring production will be doing Hound of the Baskervilles which is a Sherlock Homes classic

May 13th – 15th They will be doing a production of Oliver.

Phoenix Players

No report at this time.

Tumbleweed Productions

No report at this time.

SOUTHEAST

Rep: Cathy McGrath

Candlewick Players

Please check out their website: candlewick.ca

flatlands theatre company

In September to kick off our 10th season we performed Pith in the Winkler Bethel Park. Our fall student classes ran for 6 weeks. Flatlands just wrapped up our fall show of Anne of Green Gables today. We are planning auditions for our spring show of Diary of Anne Frank. We will perform May 5-8th. Our winter classes are starting in January and end with our student production on April 8th and 9th of The Wizard of Oz. Please check out their website <http://www.flatlandstheatre.com/>

Pine Creek Players

Pinecreek Players is planning a tour of "A Little Christmas Spirit" by Pat Cook in November.

Prairie Players

As we "go to press" Prairie Players are in the middle of production of "Arsenic and Old Lace" Directed by by Stephanie Kauffman, the play has 14 actors and is running 4 shows Nov 11-14—2 regular, 2 dinner theatre. It is going great as we speak. Check out their website: prairieplayers.ca

Tiger Hills Amateur Theatre

THAT is taking some time off.

Our subgroup, "THAT'S for Seniors", in conjunction with M.I.L.E.S. for Seniors in Holland, is going well. We had a spring production and just had our fall production on Nov. 1st. We are meeting on Nov. 24 to begin our next venture. Under the direction of Donna Cuddy, we will begin reading selected scripts and prepare for a production in April/May 2016.

WINNIPEG

Rep: Ron Blicq.

Broken Record Productions

No report at this time.

Piper Pride Productions Inc.

No report at this time.

R-G Productions

No report at this time.

Shoestring Players

No report at this time.

ONLINE PLAYWRITING WORKSHOP

On 1 January 2016, ACT will launch an online workshop designed to help members of Drama Groups in Manitoba write their own one-act stage plays, rather than have to rely solely on existing plays for which the Group often has to pay a royalty. The workshop facilitator will create an individualized program for each participant, which will include working on their own play as an integral activity. Participants will work at their own pace.

The workshop facilitator will be Ron Blicq, who is the Treasurer of R-G Productions in Manitoba, runs a similar program for the Guernsey Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Club (GADOC) in the UK, and is a well-established playwright whose plays are performed internationally.

Please visit the ACT web site for more information or to register for this exciting opportunity!

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Next newsletter deadline:

May 15, 2015

We're sure you'll have many things to talk about following ACTFest 2016! In addition to event reports and regional updates, *Curtain Up* welcomes submission of other content from any ACT members. This is *your* newsletter! So help us be the newsletter you want to see.