

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRES OF MANITOBA

ACT MANITOBA

ANNUAL REPORT

2010-2011

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I. Overview

A. Background and Synopsis of 2010-2011

Hazel Lamont: President

ACT continues to be a provincial organization for Manitoba community theatre groups. We had thirty-one members in five regions: SE Man, NE Man, SW Man, NW Man and Winnipeg.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS met regularly throughout the year, including four full board meetings and two teleconferences. Email communication was used between meetings.

THE ACT WEBSITE, www.actmanitoba.mb.ca, maintained and updated regularly, is receiving many visits. The secretary continues to notice an increase in inquiries coming from the website. All information is there for members and non-members alike to access. All aspects of ACT are covered on the website.

THE ACT NEWSLETTER, *Curtain Up!*, appeared three times in the year to keep members informed of all current activities. The newsletter may also be accessed from the website. All groups are encouraged to submit information and articles to the newsletter.

A RESOURCE LIST of persons available to teach at workshops, etc. is updated and available from the secretary.

ACTFEST 2011 was hosted by flatlands theatre company of Winkler on May 13-15. Collaboration with Manitoba Association of Playwrights allowed member groups to perform Manitoba written plays at ACTFest with no copyright fees for those performances. Six of the nine plays performed were "made and played in Manitoba."

SCHOLARSHIP FUND: ACT provides financial help to any individual of an affiliated group who wants to further his/her theatrical education. ACT has set aside \$1000 per year for this purpose. The application form is posted on the website. One person took advantage of this opportunity this year.

THEATRE DEVELOPMENT FUND: ACT sets aside \$1000 per year for member groups wishing to have a group workshop. The application form is also on the website. Five groups were allocated funds for workshops this year. The funds were fully used.

INSURANCE coverage is included for all groups in the membership fee. This is a third party form of insurance coverage and allows for \$1 million of liability.

Goals in STRATEGIC PLANNING continue to be met. Membership is still increasing. Educational programs are being used. The newsletter and website allow exchange and dissemination of information.

FUNDRAISING has improved our finances this year. We were successful in getting a grant of \$2500 from the Manitoba Community Services Council, Inc. Also, letters seeking sponsorship from several businesses in Manitoba were put out. We hope that these will alert people to our financial needs and may lead to donations in the future.

B. DIRECTION FOR 2011-2012

Hazel Lamont: President

The format under which we provide services to our member groups seems to be working. Hence we will not deviate too far from this pattern.

ACTFEST: Whitemud Comedy Company of Neepawa has been awarded the 2012 ACTFest. They are already hard at work to make this an event not to be missed. The venue will be The Roxy Theatre, Neepawa.

THEATRE DEVELOPMENT FUND: The Theatre Development Fund appears to be more popular with our members than the Scholarship Fund. We therefore will increase our funding in the Theatre Development Fund to \$1500 per annum.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND: Due to financial constraints and the smaller uptake in numbers for the Scholarship Fund, we will decrease the amount of money available per year to \$500. Hopefully, we will be able to restore monies in this fund in the future.

ACT WEBSITE will be our main source of communication and dissemination of information. Due to the necessity of having to make every penny work hard for ACT, it has been decided to send out the newsletter via the website. No further hard copies will be sent by mail. Every member group has at least two contacts with email availability. There should be no deterioration in the service provided.

NEWSLETTER: As has been stated, the newsletter will be available solely on the website in the future. The number of issues will decrease from three to two per year, namely in December and June.

FUNDRAISING will be continued next year. Contact has been made with corporate businesses. We hope that this will build communications. We will be unable to apply to MCSC for 18 months due to our successful bid last year. It is difficult to find the right opportunity for fundraising with such a geographically scattered membership.

INSURANCE: For many groups the deciding factor for membership is insurance for their community theatre group. It has been decided to increase our liability coverage from \$1 million to \$2 million.

MEMBERSHIP FEES: In part due to the increase in liability coverage and in part due to the ever-increasing nature of expenses that we face, the Board sought the agreement of the membership at a general meeting at ACTFest to increase fees from \$100 to \$150 for the upcoming year.

II. 2010-2011 Programs and Recommendations

A. ACT Festival 2011

Donna Cuddy

ACTFest 2011 was hosted by flatlands theatre company on May 13 in Winkler and was again a successful learning experience for the 192 participants. In all, nine plays were performed at the P.W. Enns Centennial Hall. This year, ACT collaborated with Map (Manitoba Association of Playwrights) to ensure that some of the plays were "Made and Played in Manitoba." This meant that ACT groups could access scripts which could be performed with royalties waived. Of the nine plays, six were Manitoba plays, four of which were written by MAP playwrights. The adjudicators and workshop instructors for the weekend were Jim Forsythe of Brandon University, Phillip Duncan of Morden Collegiate Institute and Scott Plett, artistic director of the Crosswalk Players from Landmark. The Honorable Flor Marcelino, Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, brought greetings from the provincial government. With the addition of flatlands theatre company, there are now nine ACT groups capable of hosting ACTFest: an encouraging sign for the years ahead.

B. Regional Reports

NE Regional Report

Donna Cuddy

Gimli Theatre Assoc: The Gimli Theatre Association (GTA) is a group of amateur thespians who reside in the Gimli-Arborg- Riverton-Winnipeg Beach area of Manitoba's Interlake. Their home is the "A-Spire Theatre", which is actually the Gimli Unitarian Church, located on Second Avenue in downtown Gimli. Currently, their membership comprises sixteen "regular" (dues paid) and ten "irregular" (occasional) members. Activity Synopsis: 1 September 2010 – 31 August 2011: Despite having been denied access to the theatre for three months during renovations, they managed to entertain a total audience of 997 folks by presenting three shows (each) of three different plays and by hosting three shows (each) of five different plays that were performed by guest groups from other Manitoba localities.

The details are as follows: GTA Performances: *The Way Of All Fish* by Elaine May; *Check Please* by Jonathon Rand; and *This is A Play* by Daniel MacIvor.

Guest Group Performances: Shoestring Players (Winnipeg) – *Mary & Martha* by Veralyn Warkentin; Tumbleweed Productions (Virden) – *Flemming (an American thriller)* by Sam Bobrick; 7 Ages Productions (Brandon) – *Shirley Valentine* by Willy Russell; R-G Productions (Winnipeg) – *Choosing Home* by Ron Blicq; and Merlyn Productions (Winnipeg) – *Suppressed Desires* by Susan Glaspell.

Additionally, six of their members attended the ACT Festival in Winkler.

All of this was accomplished chiefly through the skills, sweat and dedication of three key people: Vice-Chairman/Summer Theatre Coordinator Pierre Parent, Artistic Director Michele Broadhurst and Properties Director/Technical Assistant Pierre Brandelius. Thanks to them, Gimli Theatre Association has entertained people, made enough money to pay all their bills, and celebrate a year-end profit of \$33.46!

Prairie Players held their Fall Play and Dinner Theatre in November. The production featured the play *M*A*S*H*, directed by Christopher Kitchen and written by a friend of his from a theatre group down south, and was based on the television series, not the original movie. They held one night with the play only, and three nights of dinner theatre. The play night was almost sold out (over 400), and the dinner theatre was completely sold out for all three nights (225 per night). Needless to say, it was a great success!

The spring production, held at the end of April, 2011, featured the dramatic comedy, *David's Mother*, directed by Violet Enns. It was the play only, for three nights, as the group does a dinner theatre only in the fall. The acting was outstanding, and their performances were talked about around town for weeks afterward. Due to the very poor weather right at that time, attendance was down.

Haystack Productions: The most recent play the Haystack group performed was called *Stealing Home*. They performed this in early May. The theme of the play is not about baseball, but rather about two bungling robbers who unwittingly rob a funeral home. Just as the police arrive to apprehend the robbers, the funeral director/ owner identifies one of the robbers as her lost son, making for lots of humor. In early December the Haystack group put on a production with the children called *A Night At The Wax Museum*. This production was a parody of the movie by the same name. Essentially two school children are locked in the wax museum where the wax figures come to life and perform a series of individual skits.

Holy Hams of Selkirk United Church: presented the romantic comedy *Two Husbands in Heaven* by playwright Poullette McDougal April 13, 15, 16 & 17, 2011. It was their eleventh annual dessert theatre production. The cast of four men and four women entertained 767 people from Selkirk and the surrounding communities over four performances. Decadent desserts were enjoyed by the audience following the Friday and Saturday evening performances and the Sunday afternoon matinee. While the cast and crew put in the bulk of the hours, it takes approximately 75 volunteers to pull this community production together. We're proud of our Holy Hams.

Pinawa Players: The past year has been a busy one for the Pinawa Players. Their Fall 2010 production was *Moon Over Buffalo*, directed by Daryl and Wanda Woodbeck and combined with a dinner theatre. For the first time they extended their dinner theatre evening to three nights. It was a gamble, but it was extremely successful, and they have secured the services of the same caterer for their next dinner theatre featuring *Lafferty's Wake*.

Over the past year final modifications have been made to the workshop renovations. They are now planning a renovation of their lighting and sound systems.

Both the additional events, the Birthday Parade and the Carol Sing, were well attended and very successful.

Their spring production was held in April this year to ensure that they had a full audience including the snow birds that tend not to fly back until April. It was a good decision as *On Golden Pond* was well attended over the three nights. The play was presented at the ACT Festival in Winkler and was well received there as well.

Thompson Playhouse performed on three different occasions this past year.

One in November was called *Murdered to Death* by playwright Peter Gordon. It was a murder spoof with a cast of about ten and ran for two nights. In February they performed their fourth year of beer and skits. It has become their annual fundraiser where they do skits, but they also invite different community groups to compete with their own skits. The winning community group then receives a token trophy for its efforts. Great fun is had by all.

And finally, the group did a dessert and sketches fundraising for their local church in lieu of fees for utilizing the church for rehearsals. The sketches are all written by the actors and board members. Another well-received event.

Winnipeg Regional Report **Cathy McGrath**

The Winnipeg Region had eight members in 2010-2011. Eeshka-Peeshka, Lunatics Liberation Theatre, NewStage Manitoba, Relativity Theatre, R-G Productions, Shoestring Players, Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre and Merlyn Productions. All groups were very active this past year with their annual productions, performances at the Fringe, performances at Gimli Summer Festival; in addition, a number were also represented at the 2011 ACT Festival in Winkler. We look forward to another busy season ahead.

SE Regional Report **Donna Cuddy**

Candlewick Players: It's been a busy year for Candlewick's different drama groups. In the fall, Candlewick's Senior High Xplor Drama students presented *Pride and Prejudice* at the Manitou Opera House. Students came from Snowflake, La Riviere, Manitou, Darlingford and Winkler. Then came the young children's presentation of *A Seuss Christmas Carol* which was a creative night of drama and dance. Early December, the group produced a new script *The Mask of Torro* as dinner theatre performances at Timber's in Morden, at the Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler, and for a few private corporate functions.

In February, close to 30 actors and dancers from Manitou to Winkler took part in a workshop opportunity with an accomplished artist and mime, Daniel Julien of Quebec. On

a Western Canadian tour, Daniel was able to provide a four-hour workshop on the base aspects of Mime and Stage Physicality. The workshop was made possible by the ACT Theatre Development Fund.

In the spring, the Sr. Xplor Drama students presented *The Pink Panther Strikes Back*, and the Jr. Xplor Drama students presented *The Trial of the Big Bad Wolf*. Morden Xplor Drama students tackled *The Somewhat True Tale of Robin Hood* and *The Three Crazy Ladies in the House on the Corner*. Meanwhile, Candlewick Players worked on an Easter Presentation of *BookMark* with presentations in both Morden and Crystal City. Candlewick Director, Richard J. Klassen, was also busy working with the Steinbach Bible College drama troupe, New Creation, on their spring presentation of *Ben Hur*.

DanceWorks Studio (the dance side of Candlewick) is pleased to announce their new performance troupe, "Dynamix", which consists of young actors/dancers who present a mixed performance of magic, drama, and dance.

For more information on Candlewick check out their website: www.candlewick.ca.

flatlands theatre company: It was also a busy spring for flatlands theatre company, what with the student production of *The Vanishing Goose*, the regular production of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, and hosting ACTFest 2011. Then, in July, the troupe participated in the Winnipeg Fringe Festival as well.

Mariapolis Drama Club: This group took the year off.

Tiger Hills Amateur Theatre (THAT) is back in action after a prolonged hiatus. The torch has been passed from senior to junior club members with a newly appointed president and vice-president. The club is teeming with new blood and fresh ideas, and the new generation of players will be ready to tread the boards during the 2011-2012 season.

NW Regional Report **Tammy Barre**

Valley Stage Players presented their major production of the year, Norm Foster's *Drinking Alone*. They did three performances in November, the first of which was a dinner theatre in co-operation with the Community Foundation of Swan Valley which used it as a successful fundraiser. The other two performances were on the Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon of the weekend. All performances were held at the Veterans' Community Hall. During the late winter their players provided entertainment for the Swan River Ladies' Bongspiel and for the Manitoba Provincial Mixed by performing two original skits: *Painting the Porch* and *Loco Radio*.

Vagabond Theatre had a very busy season, beginning with *Nuncrackers- A Nonsense Christmas Musical* in the fall. Then in March, they hosted *Wingfield On Ice – Special Touring Production* by Manitoba Theatre Centre. Following that, they performed John Patrick's *Curious Savage* and then Anthony Drewe's *Honk Jr.* Both of their spring productions can be viewed on you-tube by following the link on the group's website.

While on their website, look and listen to the 2011 Acting Up Musical Theatre Camp attendees rehearsing the camp theme song...*Always Friends*. Acting Up is a theatre camp for children age 5-16 which provides professional instruction and was held in August this year.

Whitemud Comedy Co. performed *Sex, Please, We're 60* written by Michael and Susan Panter in April to a sold-out crowd for three nights running. Their future project is upgrading the lighting in their theatre.

This theatre group also worked with the Viscount Cultural Centre for fundraising by performing a reading of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*. A local doctor and his family volunteered for these readings.

Theatre Amisk performed the musical *Crazy for You* by Gershwin to a sold-out crowd for four nights. The cast and crew of about 100 community members recently came together for a pot luck dinner. A good time was had by all.

Theatre 53 has been working with their community library. This year they formed a youth group. Meeting once a week for fourteen weeks, the youth group performed a play in March. The children did everything, deciding on the sets, costumes, etc. The play was titled *The Girl Fell Through A Hole In Her Sweater* and was written by playwright Niomie Watts. They also partnered with the library for a spooky Halloween night of horror stories and readings complete with lightning and fog. It was an adults-only event.

Theatre 53 also performed the play *Mums the Word Collective 2-The Teenage Years*. It was presented on Mother's Day weekend and was well received.

Finally they also performed at ACT Festival this year. They took *The Good Old Days* with a cast of four. They also performed this production in their home community for two different events.

Rapid City Drama Club: no report

Mossey River Drama Club performed *The Comedy of Sherlock Holmes* by playwright Dick Charlton for three nights and was well received. The theatre group found the production fun to perform because the British humor in it has both double and triple meaning. The cast enjoyed the mind challenges this script provided.

SW Regional Report **Cathy Tough**

Adlib from Boissevain did not renew their membership for this period, but we wish them luck in their future endeavours.

From Brandon, **7 Ages Productions** presented *The Buddy Holly Story* in April. They attended ACTFest 2011 in Winkler performing *Don't Touch*, an original play by Manitoban Bruce Sarbit. They also performed at the Gimli Summer Theatre Festival August 12 – 14 with the well-known play *Shirley Valentine*.

Mecca Productions from Brandon presented *Spamalot* in March, *The Wiz* in April and *Steel Magnolias* in June. They also offered summer theatre programs for young students.

The Outcasts from Brandon and **Spotlight on Shilo** were on hiatus this year. A number of their regular actors were busy performing with other groups.

Phoenix Players from Virden presented their fall play *Medium Rare. The Emperor's New Art* written by Phoenix member George Baker was performed at ACTFest 2011.

Tumbleweed Productions of Virden revived *Lafferty's Wake* in September for a fund raiser. Their new play *Squabbles* was performed four times in various south-western communities. The new-year began with a performance of *Lost* for the Provincial Golden Gals Bauspiel. In April they presented four skits: *Look Away Now, Gums, Lost* and *A Little Something for the Ducks* in Brandon. Two of these were presented for the Flying Farmers Convention in April. They attended ACTFest in Winkler and performed *A Little Something for the Ducks*. They also attended the Gimli Summer Theatre Festival and performed their current play *Flemming*.

C. Scholarship Fund

Donna Cuddy

The Scholarship Fund has been in operation for three years now. Although the Board implemented reasonable mileage payments and promoted the fund, this year we had only one person apply for funding for individual theatrical education. There are still funds available, although the Board has decided to transfer some of this money into the Theatre Development, which has been more utilized by the membership. People will find all the details in the application form which is posted on the website. This fund is available to all ACT members in Manitoba.

D. Theatre Development Fund

Donna Cuddy

The Theatre Development Fund was a huge success again this year, with four member groups undertaking four different workshop projects. Tumbleweed Productions hosted a

workshop on character development and blocking with Dean Harder; Phoenix Players had a session on acting and moving on stage; Candlewick Productions worked on stage physicality and mime with Daniel Julien; and Shoestring Players requested funds in order to hire the playwright to work with some of the actors in preparation for their production at the Gimli Festival. This is the first time that we have had a request for ongoing mentorship. All of the monies in this fund were allocated this year, and the Board has approved a transfer of some of the allotted funds in the Scholarship Fund to this more popular fund.

E. Fundraising Report

David Johnson

The ACT Board made application to the Manitoba Committee Services Council (MCSC) for additional funding for educational and operating expenses. Based upon examination of the application and telephone conversation with David Johnson, the MCSC granted ACT MB \$2500.00 towards operating expenses.

F. Newsletter Report

Hazel Lamont

The newsletter editor put together three issues during the year. It has been decided to go to electronic delivery for the newsletter. The webmaster has a "newsletter notification" list which covers many ACT individual members of affiliated groups. Those with no email connection can ask their contact person within their group to print a copy from the website. It is intended that newsletters be archived on the website. In the upcoming year there will be two issues of the newsletter, in June and December.

G. Website Report

John Tait (member-at-large)

ACT Website (Oct/2011) - John Tait (member-at-large) Email: actman@mts.net
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 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.

We also 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.

The website Entry page includes a photo gallery of group performances which are updated throughout the season and we encourage group photo submissions of recent productions. On our Home page, we now provide 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 also have a section in our Resources page to provide information on the programs introduced by the Board in 2009 – ACT Scholarships and Theatre Development Funds.

We have introduced a new web 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. We encourage members to visit the page frequently to see if there are any upcoming auditions.

From our feedback, members are using the Website to get information primarily 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.

Our Board is accessible by direct email to the current ACT Secretary using the Email Address: ActSecretary@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 when 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.

H. Insurance:

David Johnson

ACT's 2010-2011 insurance policy remained basically the same as the previous year's program. As with the previous year, the policy was underwritten by Premiere Insurance Underwriting Services Inc. through the insurance offices of Multimedia Risk Consultants & Insurance Brokers of Winnipeg.

The policy was initiated primarily for its liability protection:

- Protection from any liable injury to the audience
- Protection from any liable damages to the venue
- Protection from liable loss re expensive rental equipment or props.

Following up on the previous year's decision to increase overall liability coverage, the ACT Board took their recommendations to the membership. A brief General Meeting was held at ACTFest in May with liability coverage increases on the agenda. The Board's recommendation to increase ACT's liability coverage from \$1 Million to \$2 Million was presented, discussed, voted upon and passed by the membership.

III. Administration Report

A. Board of Directors:

President.....	Hazel Lamont
Vice-President	David Johnson
Treasurer.....	Caren Dundas
Secretary.....	Donna Cuddy
Past President.....	Maureen Taggart
Regional Representative	Tammy Barre
Regional Representative.....	Liz Driedger
Regional Representative.....	Darren Klassen
Regional Representative	Cathy McGrath
Regional Representative.....	Cathy Tough

Committees:

Elections	Maureen Taggart
Newsletter.....	Fiona Lamont
Scholarship Fund	Hazel Lamont and Cathy Tough
Theatre Development Fund	Maureen Taggart
Website.....	John Tait

B. Staffing

Donna Cuddy

ACT had no paid staff support during the 2010-2011 year. All administrative and committee work was done by Board and member volunteers.

C. Facilities, Equipment, Materials and Insurance:

David Johnson

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, in Winkler at the ACTFest Festival venue and at the home of Cathy McGrath near Neepawa. Two meetings were also held via tele-conference. No new equipment has been added to ACT's existing complement over the last fiscal year.

The association has obtained Liability Insurance through Multimedia Risk Consultants & Insurance Brokers. Although the cost of insurance has risen dramatically in recent years, ACT has obtained the best coverage and rate possible. Highlights of our policy can be found on our website.