

# Curtain Up!

ACT NEWSLETTER

Winter 2011

## Whitemud Comedy Company ACTFest 2012

Whitemud Comedy Company is thrilled to be hosting the 2012 Provincial ACT Drama Festival. Come to the Roxy Theatre in Neepawa on May 4, 5 & 6, 2012 for a weekend to remember. The last time Neepawa hosted the Act Festival was in 1999. It was also the first time that there was a theme for the Festival. That has come back to haunt us as we have been wracking our brains to come up with a new idea. There have been so many wonderful themes in the last few years that we had high standards to meet. So... we decided to set our own standard for enjoyment. The theme for the 2012 ACTFEST will be "Clowning Around." Whatever tickles your funny bone, or makes you laugh until you cry. All you have to do is have fun. How easy is that? As details of the Festival are confirmed they will be posted on our website at [2012actfestival@weebly.com](mailto:2012actfestival@weebly.com). You can also link to us through the ACT website at [www.actmanitoba.mb.ca](http://www.actmanitoba.mb.ca).

Once again we will be offering "Made and Played in Manitoba". This is a collaboration between ACT and the Manitoba Association of Playwrights (MAP) to feature new plays written by Manitoba writers.

MAP's playwrights will again be offering short plays to ACT member groups for presentation at the 2012 ACT Festival in Neepawa. There are 26 plays being offered to ACT member groups, and the playwrights are generously waiving the royalty fees for this event. Links to the scripts and to information about "Made and Played in Manitoba" are available on the ACT website.



Roxy Theatre, Neepawa TOP: Close up of Signage  
BOTTOM: View from street

If you see a play that interests you and feel it would "fit" your group, contact the playwright directly and ask for a copy of the script. Do it soon, because rights to perform the plays will be assigned on a first come-first served basis

Remember! You don't have to be involved in a performance to attend the ACT Festival. Come for the experience, the learning, the camaraderie and the fun.

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## President's Message

The dust has settled after another AGM and apparently I am the new President. This position could easily have been filled by any of our experienced board members, so I will consider this an honor to have been their choice. I have been a member of Tumbleweed Productions since its inception 5 years ago, and they are a group of "acting friends" that are very dear to me. Our past-president, Hazel Lamont, is also a member of our group. I think we all wish Hazel the very best as she steps down from this position. Hazel encompasses everything that volunteering is about and our community is thriving because of her and people like her.

Our AGM went uneventful, but in some places, very thought provoking. We were reminded to use our ACT logo whenever we advertise our own local performances. We should also put on our programs that we are members of ACT Manitoba. Both of these are very easy to do and I am as guilty as others in forgetting to it, but not anymore! Let's all do our part in making the general public aware that ACT exists!

We are thrilled to welcome Stephanie Clark to our board as the new S.E. Representative. It is always great to find "new blood", but more than that, it is imperative! We have many seasoned board members, but they are getting tired. We are still short two representatives and this would be a great opportunity to learn "a thing or two" from our experienced board. It is fun and very rewarding! If you are interested at all, please contact any of our board members for more information.

We are very pleased to be working with MAP on our second year of "Made and Played in Manitoba". The format worked so well last year at ACTfest that it will return to ACTfest 2012 in Neepawa. The list of MAP written plays will be posted on our Act website very soon and based on last year's response, they were snaffled up very quickly. Remember it is first come, first served.!

Until next time...  
Cathy T.



## ACT & MAP

Act is again working hand in hand with MAP hoping to showcase our Manitoba playwright's at our annual festival. Please check our ACT website for a list of MAP written plays, chose one that your group would like to perform at ACTfest 2012 and then contact the playwright for more information. These plays were a huge success last year, so choose quickly. If you have any questions, our website will direct you. "Made and Played in Manitoba", how much better can it get - local performers supporting local playwrights! Good luck!



TOP: a flatlands member in *Pith* BOTTOM: a member of Shoestring Players in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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## Road Trip to Pinawa

Sometimes we are so wrapped up in our own performances that we never think to attend other groups' performances. We don't have time! It's too far to go! Well, eight of us from Tumbleweed Productions in Virden discovered that another ACT member group were about to stage a performance of our all time favourite play, "Lafferty's Wake" by Susan Turlish.

With tickets reserved we set off in two vehicles to make a 4 1/2 hour journey to the other side of the province to Pinawa. It was one of those almost crazy things to do but very rewarding in the end. We chatted, lunched and laughed all the way to Pinawa. Only 2 of us had attended ACTFest there in 2005. Pinawa is on the road to nowhere (excuse me for saying so!). You must make the effort to go there.

That effort was totally worth it. The Pinawa Players were very welcoming. Without them being aware of it we learned so much at that night's performance. From the professional way that the front of house was presented, to the professionalism of the performance and stage set, to the little things that made the whole evening enjoyable we learned where we could make improvements to our presentation in general. The cast was nervous about being "critiqued" by a group who had performed this play ten times already. We had no intention of critiquing but were watching for different takes on the production. We felt a common awareness when chatting with the cast at the end of the evening. What were the challenges of the play? What were the special points that we enjoyed?

Thank you Pinawa Players. We will not change too much in our next two performances booked for March 2012 for St. Patrick's Day celebrations. The only hiccup in the whole day was a slower ride home on a snowy night. We kept our driver focused by discussing the days adventure , for so it was:

- A magical mystery tour for those who visited Pinawa for the first time.
- A gastronomic delight – have you ever tasted the fabulous catering of Nor-East Enterprises Ltd?
- A communication with amazing, like-minded people.
- All that helps to make life more exciting.

We encourage others to visit other groups' productions. You won't regret it!

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## Amateur Theatre Bloopers

It has happened to all of us; tripping on a carpet. a fly undone, a wig falls off, all the bloopers that are hilarious with live theatre. Sometimes we can cover them up, but sometimes there is absolutely nothing that can be done. We are asking anyone with a special "disaster" to share them with us in our newsletter. Is this not part of what binds us all together and makes community theatre so d\*\*\* unpredictable? Here's mine to start.

It was my third play and I was to have a very serious conversation with a potted plant. Thankfully it was to be short as I was to be interrupted by a neighbour lady. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to me, this lady broke the zipper on her pants as she was changing for our scene, delaying her entrance. This "short" conversation became uncomfortably long because, really, how much can you say to a plastic rhododendron that hasn't already been said. I was finally rescued by another performer, and my skills at adlibbing have now greatly improved.



ABOVE: flatlands members in *Pith*

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## This Issue's Quote of the Day

*Acting is behaving truthfully under imaginary circumstances.*

Sanford Meisner



**SOUTHWEST**

As per their web page, 7 Ages Productions of Brandon is happy to say, "WE'RE BACK". Many people expressed regret that 7 Ages was ceasing operations – so many that they decided to resume their activities, albeit at a slightly slower pace. In January, they will showcase the music of Patsy Cline with the production of *A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline*. May will see the staging of the classic American musical, *Guys and Dolls*. The show is often called "the perfect musical" and has not been staged in Brandon before with an adult cast. All are invited to visit the 7 Ages web site for more showtime and audition information.

As per its web page, Mecca Productions of Brandon is pleased to perform the musical *Annie* at the WMCA from November 24 to 27, 2011. Shortly after it will start gearing up for the March 22-24, 2012 WMCA production of *Nunsense, The Mega-Musical*, a musical comedy by Dan Goggin. "The Little Sisters of Hoboken are on a mission... be afraid, be very afraid..." Further information on both productions can be obtained by visiting the Mecca web site at <http://www.mecca-productions.com>.

Phoenix Players of Virden have been very busy with their annual fall production. They started with a fundraising dinner theatre for the local fire department. *Acting Can Be Murder* by Eddie McPherson was presented on October 29<sup>th</sup> and also on November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> at Virden's Aud theatre.

Spotlight on Shilo of Brandon/Shilo is not currently involved with a fall production but hopes to be active for the spring season.

Tumbleweed Productions of Virden went on the road with *Flemming; An American Thriller* by Sam Bobrick. Their first stop was at the Gimli Summer Theatre Festival, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. They returned to Virden for an October

1<sup>st</sup> performance for the Curling Club which is fundraising for a new rink. The remainder of the season took the group to Miniota on October 28<sup>th</sup>, Brandon on November 5<sup>th</sup> and back to Virden on November 19<sup>th</sup>. Over the past three years Tumbleweed has helped to raise close to \$50,000 for various organizations in a number of communities.

David Johnson

SOUTHWEST REGION

**SOUTH - EAST**

November 3-6 marked flatland's performance of *Pride and Prejudice* which received an excellent turn-out. There was also a surprise proposal as one cast member proposed to another during one of the shows.

Next up for flatland are Student Classes which are being held from January 9 to March 24, with the class performance on March 23 & 24.

With a mixed ensemble of both veterans and rookies, THAT made a comeback this November 4-6 with a double-bill. *Learning to Drive* and *Two for the Pot*, two one-act comedies, were played and they were very well received. The next endeavor will be a two-act comedy running the first weekend in March.

**NORTH - WEST**

Theatre Amisk of Dauphin plans to do a spring production on March 1, 2 and 3, 2012 at the Watson Arts Centre here in Dauphin. Yvonne Lillie will direct *Waiting for the Parade*; auditions have been held and casting is complete. Theatre Amisk has also been asked to participate in a reading of *A Christmas Carol* by the Dauphin Public Library as part of the local Christmas celebrations, but very little information is as yet available. Our last production, the musical *Crazy for You* was quite successful. Finally, we were sorry to see some long-term members move away.

Bev MacKenzie, Bernice Sliworsky and Con and Colleen Artibise will all be missed by our group.

Whitemud Comedy Company will be doing *The Odd Couple*, male version this coming spring in April a couple of weeks before we host the ACT Festival for 2012. That's April 12 - 14 for anyone who might like to drop by. ACT Festival will be May 4-6. Clear your weekend now, we are looking forward to having you here in our fair town!

The Valley Stage Players have just finished presenting Norm Foster's *Mending Fences*. Again this year they partnered with the Foundation of Swan Valley to help them in their fund raising efforts. The first performance was held on Friday, November 25 and took the form of a dinner theatre. The second performance was on Saturday, November 26 was, as the Foundation calls it, a "cheesy night out". The third performance was a matinee performance on Sunday, November 27. All performances were held at the Veterans' Community Hall in Swan River. This fall we have two new actors in our cast and a new stage manager. We are always excited to get new people involved in our theatre group.

Thank-you to Tammy Barre, Vice-President of ACT, for making the two hour trip to Swan River to attend our Saturday night performance of *Mending Fences* by Norm Foster. It was great seeing you there!

This year Rapid City Drama Club's dinner theatre involved two plays, a short one entitled *Not My Cup of Tea* by A.F. Groff and *Aunt Maggity's Dark and Stormy Night* by Edith Weiss. The meal was served between acts and plays and was related to the theme of the plays. All this fun and adventure took place November 24, 25, and 26 at the Rapid City Legion Hall. This dedicated group of individuals practiced very hard all fall and enjoyed showing off their talents!

WINNIPEG

Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre performed *O. Henry Stories on Stage*, a presentation of four delightful O. Henry short stories, adapted for the stage on Nov 18, 19, and 20 at St Boniface College Salle Caron Theatre.

The Mennonite Theatre will be presenting George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*, as part of the Playwright's festival, on Feb 1-4 at St. Boniface College Theatre, each night's performance will commence at 8:05 pm.

Merlyn Productions recently produced three successful productions entitled (Collectively) *Morality Plays* at Winnipeg's Ellice Cafe & Theatre. The group's next presentation will be *Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll's children's classic. This is an adaptation which will run Dec 7 to Dec 10, again at The Ellice Cafe. Merlyn has expanded to include training and a theatre school.

R-G Productions performed a new play, *Choosing Home* at both the Fringe Festival in July and the A-Spire Theatre, Gimli, August 19-21.

Twelve months ago a special project for Community Living Manitoba was started. It involves writing, rehearsing and performing three educational plays that deal with the right and wrong ways to live, work, and communicate with Vulnerable Persons (i.e. people who have disabilities such as Down Syndrome). The plays will be performed at community centres in and around Winnipeg, rather than in a regular stage setting that is open to general audiences.

Each play comes in two parts, and each part is about 12-15 minutes long. In the first part the actors act inappropriately in their relationship with a Vulnerable Person, then in the second part they perform appropriately. Between the two parts a facilitator works with the audience to establish their reactions to what they have seen, and discuss what has been done inappropriately. And then after the second part there is a second discussion.

The concept originated with Rose Flaig, Director of Community Living Manitoba. The first play was performed in June 2011 as a pilot test and is ready to be performed elsewhere in the new year. The second and third plays are currently (November 2011) in rehearsal and will be performed for the first time in November for play 2 and in December for play 3. Following about six performances next year, the plays will be videotaped for use in more remote locations.

A plan to perform E. Nesbitt's story *The Railway Children* in January 2012, announced previously, has been cancelled due to the focus on the Community Living plays.

R-G Productions are planning to take a play to ACTFest in July 2012 and have just registered for the 2012 Fringe.

Shoestring Players first production of 2012 will be *Great Catherine* by George Bernard Shaw, directed by Kathy McLennan and *Annajanska: The Bolshevik Empress* by George Bernard Shaw, directed by Maureen Taggart. These two plays will constitute a double-bill. They will be performed as part of the Annual Playwright's Festival hosted each winter by The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre. This year the playwright is George Bernard Shaw.

Performances will take place at the Colin Jackson Studio Theatre at Prairie Theatre Exchange on the following dates: January 22 - 25 and January 27 - 29 (two performances on the 29<sup>th</sup>). For times and more details please see the Shaw Festival Program.

Shoestring Players are also considering a production of *Inherit the Wind* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. With a large cast of 12 women and 12 men, plus a boy and girl aged 12-14 the play will present a real acting challenge. Most of the cast will be on stage half of the time. The play, which is still relevant to-day, was written in 1955 and is loosely based on the Scopes "monkey" trial of 1925. Scopes, a young teacher, is accused of disobeying a Tennessee law prohibiting the teaching of Darwinism or the theory of evolution as it pertained to man. The trial became a national sensation. Casting for this play will take place following the Shaw Festival on Tues., Feb 7, 2012.

Shoestring performance plan: May 5 ACTFest, Neepawa, last week-end of May (4 performances) Winnipeg run, June 22-24 Gimli Summer Theatre.

Shoestring Players are once again applying for the Fringe Festival. They should know if they are successful by mid December. A revival of *Mary and Martha* is being considered.



ABOVE: members of Shoestring Players of Winnipeg in *The Burned House*.

Time Boom Productions is not currently active in a project, but that doesn't mean the members (five in all) are not busily involved in various areas of the theatre. Since several of the group will be taking winter vacations, they are already rehearsing for their ActFest play in Neepawa. Three women (Janet Taylor, Joan Wilton, Dorothy Talman), and one man (Bryce Hallick), all retired seniors and wannabe actors, met in 2008 while taking the 55+ Acting Essentials course at Actors Training Centre of Manitoba. At course end they wrote and performed the play, *Time Boom*, which was facilitated by their instructor, Nancy Drake. The following year, these thrilled and scared novices, performed *Time Boom* at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival. By this time Time Boom Productions now included Bryce's wife, Christine, as their Stage Manager.

These individuals all became fast friends and, though their acting activities took them along different roads, they continued to meet regularly and keep in touch, with the oft-expressed desire to work together again (shades of the Supremes!). Have you any idea how difficult it is to find a play for seniors with a cast of 3 females, one male? Eventually, the Internet provided one that quite suited them, but required one more female actor. Christine came to the rescue. She has now changed hats from Stage Manager to "treading the boards" and will be making her "stage debut" in Neepawa, playing the role of God. Yes, God. Nothing like starting at the top!

Their play, entitled *Bingo Wings*, is written by Paddy Gillard-Bently, Canadian playwright living in Toronto. They feel fortunate to have Bill Moore as their Director, and Bernard Boland as their Stage Manager.

Their 2-hour weekly rehearsals, always filled with creative ideas and lots of laughter, are squeezed in around everyone's busy schedules (they are

all retired. but not according to their calendars!) and held at the home of Christine and Bryce. How lovely it is to be performing together once again!

**NORTH EAST**

Pinawa Players are into final rehearsals of *Lafferty's Wake*. Our production dates are Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. It is a dinner theatre production and again we are amazed at the popularity of dinner theatre. We are able to draw audiences from over an hour away and even further. This is our third year for dinner theatre although we have done some previously and we are now wondering if this should be an annual event. Our audiences are giving us a resounding "YES".

Prairie Players of Portage la Prairie, are working on their Fall Production, of *The Hallelujah Girls*, by Jones, Hope and Wooten, taking place November 16-19 at the William Glesby Centre. November 16 is the play only, and Nov 17-19 is our dinner theatre. Excellent comedy, directed by Terry Tully, and starring: Terrie Todd, Rosa Albanese Rawlings, Connie Krawec, Laurel Giesbrecht, Nita Wiebe, Lisa Marie Tessier, Kevin Hamm and Christopher Kitchen.

The Gimli Theatre Association (GTA) no longer exists! As a result of an approved motion at a Special General Meeting on 27 Oct 2011, we have adopted the name: "A-Spire Players".

On the weekend of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> through Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012 we will perform the play *The Art of Murder* in the A-Spire Theatre, in Gimli.

If, during the period January - May 2012, any ACT group(s) would like to stage a show in the theatre, and arrange a reciprocal visit from the Gimli group to their town, please contact Rand Parker: 204-642-5179, rahparker@hotmail.com or Pierre Parent: 204-642-8785 pparent@mymts.net

Thompson Playhouse just finished two nights of performances of *The Dixie Swim Club* by Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten. The production was a great success. In fact, after the first night's performance Facebook pages in Thompson were going crazy with all the wonderful comments about the performance. The cast had a fabulous time and are a little sad to see the end of it. They are now looking at what their next project will be...this time something the men can have fun with as well!



**2012 ACT FESTIVAL**

*Clowning Around*

May 4-6  
Neepawa, MB

*Join Us!*

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## Clear Lake Fringe Festival

This summer on the August long weekend, a Fringe Festival was held in Riding Mountain National Park. A Fringe Festival is a series of theatre performances held in one or more venues over a short period of time, generally ranging from between three days and two weeks. Several different productions are staged in each venue every day, and the performers must be able to set up and tear down their productions in a very short space of time, usually about 15 minutes at each end of a show. Fringe Festivals are unique in that they operate under four guiding principles, paramount among them that participants are selected on a non-juried basis, generally by lottery, and all ticket revenue is returned to the participants. For more information about Fringe Festivals, take a look at the Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals at <http://canadianfringefestivals.wordpress.com/>

For a first time event, it was remarkably successful. Almost 2000 people attended the 50 performances put on by 13 Companies from around the world. That brought performance attendance to 39, ranking the Festival's attendance 10th out of the 20 Fringe's across North America.

A serendipitous coming together of many different factors made the "Winnipeg Fringe comes to Clear Lake Festival" possible. The Winnipeg Fringe was a huge support, donating the time of its Producer and Technical Director to assist in planning the Festival, lending production equipment and staging, and, of course, allowing the Festival to operate under the Winnipeg Festival's name. Parks Canada was equally accommodating, most notably donating and preparing two venues and providing access to their human resource and infrastructure resources without which none of the inevitable production emergencies would have been resolved. Friends of Riding Mountain was another hero of the Festival, handling advance ticket sales and letting the Festival turn their "Learning Centre" into "Fringe Central" for the weekend. Last but not least, the wonderful volunteers. Over 75 people volunteered their time, opened their homes as billets, or did both to make the event happen. Several of the Winnipeg Fringe's most dependable volunteers even made the trip to the Park to help out over the weekend.

Finding performers was, surprisingly, both simple and extremely successful. The temporal and geographical location of the Festival in-between Winnipeg and Edmonton and their Fringe's proved to be ideal for many performers touring the Festival circuit. The number of interested companies actually exceeded the Festival's capacity, and a lottery was held to determine who would get to come perform.

The Clear Lake Fringe aims to become an annual event, and is currently working to incorporate as a non-profit organization, and planning the campaign to raise the funds necessary to make next year's Festival happen. Next year the Festival also hopes to expand the call for performers to more Manitoba theatre artists and companies, including any members of ACT who may be interested. For more information or to lend support and get involved you can go to the Festival's facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Winnipeg-Fringe-comes-to-Clear-Lake-Festival/217571264951496>, or email them at [wpgfringeatclearlake@gmail.com](mailto:wpgfringeatclearlake@gmail.com).

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THE MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF PLAYWRIGHTS &  
THE ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE MANITOBA

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ANNOUNCE :

### *The Second Annual Made and Played in Manitoba Community Theatre Event*

In 2012, MAP and ACT will again combine the creativity of Manitoba's Playwrights with the stage expertise of Manitoba's Community Theatres, at ACTFest 2012, Neepawa, May 4th to 6th and as part of Gimli Summer Theatre (date TBA)

*Made and Played in Manitoba*  
is a unique Canadian happening.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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204 488 7060

Have your say in the next issue!  
Deadline: June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Winter 2011

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Visit us on the world wide web at: [www.actmanitoba.mb.ca](http://www.actmanitoba.mb.ca)

### REGIONS

#### NORTH-EAST

A-Spire Players	Gimli
Haystack Productions	Beausejour
Pinawa Players	Pinawa
Prairie Players	Portage la Prairie
Thompson Playhouse Inc.	Thompson

#### WINNIPEG

Merlyn Productions	Winnipeg
New Stage Productions	Winnipeg
Relativity Theatre	Winnipeg
R-G Productions	Winnipeg
Shoestring Players	Winnipeg
Time Boom Productions	Winnipeg
Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre	Winnipeg

#### NORTH-WEST

Rapid City Drama Club	Rapid City
Theatre 53	The Pas
Theatre Amisk	Dauphin
Vagabond Theatre Co.	Russell
Valley Stage Players	Swan River
Whitemud Comedy Co.	Neepawa

#### SOUTH-EAST

flatlands Theatre Co.	Winkler
Tiger Hills Amateur Theatre (THAT)	Holland

#### SOUTH-WEST

7 Ages Productions	Brandon
Phoenix Players	Virden
Spotlight on Shilo Theatre Co.	Shilo
Tumbleweed	Virden
Mecca Productions	Brandon