

Volume II Issue 4
October, 2019



www.MontanaPlaywrights.org

MPN News

The official newsletter of the Montana Playwrights Network



Meet the Top Hat Players!*

(From left to right:)

Back row: Deb Nason, Sam Gooch, Sue Faulk, Liz Harter, Cynthia Webb

Front row: Kelli Krieschel, Julie Burrows, Michele Curlee, Gillian Wiatt

(Not pictured:)

Mike and Barbara Willis, Carole Mackin, Marie McAlear

*For details about this dynamic ensemble group in Helena, go to page 4 of this issue.



Pamela Mencher

Greetings from the President

Boy howdy, it's been a busy time since our 2019 July MPN News issue and we're still going strong. Since we completed the ***Queen City Roundup of Cowboy Poets, Playwrights & Storytellers*** in April, we've been occupied with the creation of the newest theatre facility in Helena, the **Helena Avenue Theatre (HAT)**. After making it through design and approval phases, we are now engaged in preparations to outfit the space while we wait for the actual remodel to be complete. I had indicated in the last two newsletters that I thought the HAT would be open by now, but unfortunately, the process has been proceeding at a glacial pace. I hope that the space will be done by November so we can invite everyone to an Open House reception before the end of 2019! However, once we have a firm date, MPN members will be the first to receive a personal invitation!

In other MPN news, the **2019 MPN Montana Premiere Project** is off and running. Details for these productions featuring original works by Montana Playwrights are found on the next page of this issue.

We also have formed our **first ensemble theatre group** in association with the Helena Avenue Theatre, the **Top Hat Players!** More groups will follow, but this first one is already working on events to be offered at the HAT! I'll keep you posted on their activities, and the others as they develop. (Read more on page 4.)

As MPN approaches the end of this calendar year, it's time for me to remind you to **renew your membership in the Montana Playwrights Network!** If you sign up now, your membership will be effective through December, 2020. Membership dues are very affordable, and member benefits are many and practical for writers, performing artists, theatre companies and arts centers, teachers, librarians, arts supporters and many others. In addition to the benefits listed on our website, you'll get in free to select MPN events, be eligible to enter our many competitions, and network with likeminded people throughout Montana.

Last, but not least, please plan to attend our **annual MPN Membership Meeting on November 23 at 3:00 p.m.** (See last page of this issue for more details.) It will be wonderful to see you all there!

MPN 2019 Montana Premiere Project

The results are in for the MPN **2019 Montana Premiere Project**! Three theatre companies in Montana have made their selections of original plays written by Montana Playwrights and are involved in creating theatre productions of their selected plays in October and November, 2019, and January/February, 2020, in association with the Montana Playwrights Network. Make your reservations for these shows today!



Coming up in **Havre at the Montana Actors Theatre**: October 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 2019: ***The Vorbit Incident***, by Jay Kettering. Visit their website for tickets and more information: www.mtactors.com.

Written by Missoula playwright, Jay Kettering, and directed by Andi Daniel, ***The Vorbit Incident***, this original comedy is set in a missile silo outside Great Falls, and follows rookie missileer, Lieutenant Snick Vorbit who doesn't have much to do at his job that isn't routine. Today, however, turns out to be anything but. He must decide whether to follow orders and launch his flight of ten nuclear missiles or trust the advice of his spiritual mentor, who may or may not be a hallucination. With the fate of the world hanging in the balance, he looks to the sky for answers.



The **Missoula** performance is **produced by the Downtown Dance Collective** and features Montana playwright, Leah Joki's original comedy, ***The Poppovichs***, on **November 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 2019**. For tickets and more information, please visit their website: www.ddcmontana.com, or call 406-360-8763.

Playwright, Ms. Joki shares these insights about her work: "I have always thought that anyone who lives past the age of fifty-years old is on borrowed time. The herd simply starts getting picked off. I started to notice in my own family that the dynamics were always up for grabs and you couldn't predict the outcomes. Although this is not completely autobiographical, all of these characters are members of my family. All of these incidents happened to them, or someone we knew. I couldn't have made this %\$#& up if I tried."



The **Helena** production is slated for the new **Helena Avenue Theatre**. For more information or tickets, please **call or text 406-235-0353**. Entitled, ***Plumb Local***, this production features three one-act plays based in Montana's culture, and also **includes original music performed by Helena musician, Steven Gores**. Tentative dates are **January 31, February 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 2020**.

Plumb Local features ***Driver's Ed***, by **Cynthia Webb**, who described her comedy thus: "This play explores a mother's discomfort in answering questions about sex with her daughter. It arose from the idea, what if the unspoken thoughts on both sides had a life of their own?" Another offering is Jay Kettering's ***Flotsam, Jetsam, and Bill***. Kettering describes it this way: "Bill's plan is simple: catch one more beautiful trout, then blow his brains out. But a young stranger interrupts his plan, and when a pair of mysterious creatures emerges from the river, Bill begins to look at his life, and time, in a whole new way." A tragic-comedy, Pamela Mencher's ***Montana Fish Story*** examines what might happen when local catch-and-eat fishermen collide with a guided, wealthy fisherman from out-of-state.



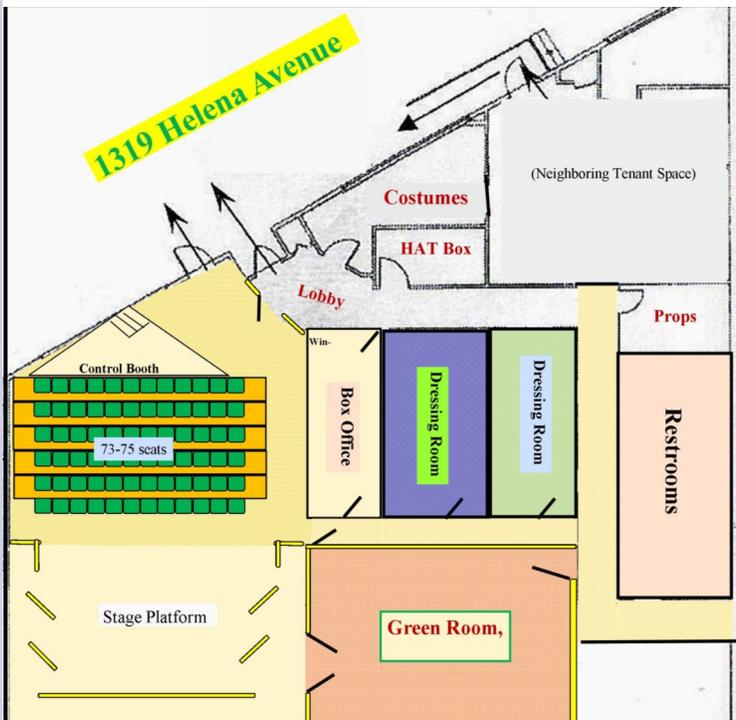
Update: Helena Avenue

We've been assigned a **new address for the HAT** by the City of Helena; **1319 Helena Avenue!** It's so new that it's not yet posted outside our entrance; but after the exterior windows and door are replaced, it'll be there!

Even though the HAT isn't ready for occupancy yet, MPN is moving forward with preparations. We are gathering donations of props, costumes, set pieces, in-kind services and funds; as well as volunteers and staff, and are forming groups such as the **Top Hat Players**. We also are filling the **schedule for 2020** with MPN events, and are negotiating with community groups and performing artists interested in producing their own events at the HAT. (If you'd like to book the facility for productions, workshops, meetings, presentations, classes, or other special events, please contact Pamela Mencher at montanaplaywrights@gmail.com.)

The **Top Hat Players** consist of performers, writers, theatre technicians, musicians, storytellers and community members interested in creating performances and special events across the artistic spectrum. The Players are working on plans for the HAT's **Open House reception**, and also will be part of our **Gala Grand Opening** performances of *Plumb Local*, Helena's production as part of **MPN's 2019 Montana Premiere Project**. (See page 3 of this issue.)

This drawing is approximate and not drawn to scale. It represents what the HAT will eventually be. The HAT Box is a "gift shop" that serves as an ongoing fundraising space with unique and vintage items for sale to our patrons. (All proceeds will support facility needs.)



Here's the HAT in progress.





Last Chance New Play Fest

Nov 8 - 17, 2019



FreeCeramics
STUDIO ART CENTER

650 Logan St
(Free Ceramics)
Helena, MT



ETC presents ten days of new works by Montana playwrights from around the state. On the docket for this year's Last Chance New Play Fest are:

- *Montana Short Cuts*, a suite of ten-minute plays on the topic "Genetically Modified."
- A pair of one-acts, *When Nana Hit the Glass* by Rebecca Ryland & *Showdown at Lost Creek Ranch* by Steve Palmer.
- *Pitiful Beautiful Pittance*, a full-length play by Susan Dunlap.
- *Becoming Number Six*, a full-length play by Ross Peter Nelson

www.experimentaltheatrecoop.org/2019

Post Scripts



- On this **back page of MPN News**, we'll print any announcements you might like to share with our membership and the general public that highlight writers' news and associated events around Montana. Send us your information and we'll include it in the next MPN News issue to come out in May, 2019.
- If you want a **copy of MPN's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws**, just send a note to: montanaplaywrights@gmail.com.
- **Share this newsletter** with your friends and anyone else who you think might be interested in our events or joining the Network. Go to our **website** to get more information:

www.MontanaPlaywrights.org.

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MPN ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

November 23, 2019

3:00 p.m.

At the HAT, 1319 Helena Avenue.

Among other agenda items, we'll touch base with members to suggest events to hold in the HAT. If there's something else you'd like to see on the agenda, please send in your suggestions soon.

There will also be a **free workshop open to members** from **1:00 pm to 2:45 pm**, just ahead of the membership meeting. Right now, we're considering the topic of creating short films using your phone! We're waiting to hear back from a filmmaker who will offer tips and guidelines in screenwriting and filmmaking.

If you would like to participate, please send a note to Pamela Mencher at montanaplaywrights@gmail.com.

Seating is limited to 14, so sign up today!