

Volume I: Issue 3
October, 2017

www.MontanaPlaywrights.org

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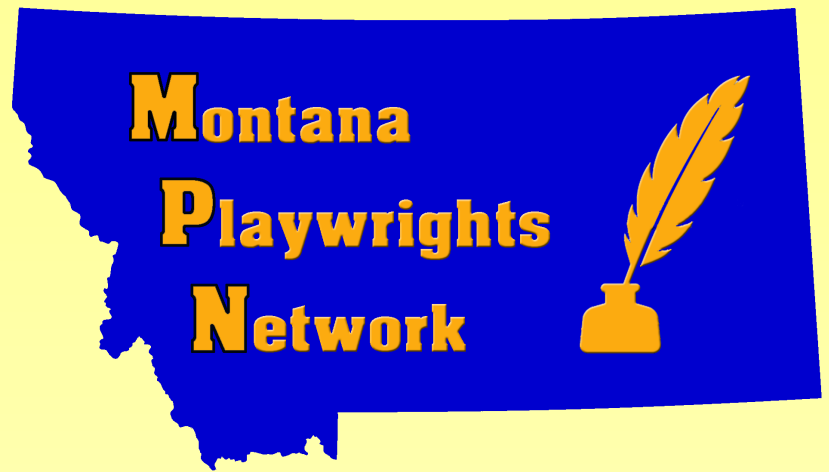
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MPN News

The official newsletter of the Montana Playwrights Network

Inside this Issue:

Montana Playwrights Conference Update

Network Announcements

Montana Tales

Meet Some of Our MPN Members!

And more...

Montana Playwrights Network

Annual Membership Meeting

November 3 at 4:00 p.m.

**at Helena College
Room 002 (lower level)**

**Election of Officers
Information
Discussion**

**Announcing selected works written by members of the
Montana Playwrights Network for the first**

MONTANA TALES!

A collection of short plays, monologues, essays and a featured
Native Storyteller will be presented immediately
following the Keynote Address
presented by:

James Still

World-renowned Playwright and Inspirational Speaker

**November 2, at 6:30 p.m. at the
Helena High School Theatre**

See page 3 of this issue for more information.

Greetings from the President

Hello, MPN members and friends! Among other activities, we've been busy presenting workshops and promoting MPN around Montana, and getting ready for the Montana Playwrights Conference, November 2 & 3, at Helena College.



The Montana Playwrights Conference is presented in **partnership** with **Helena College Foundation**, the **HC Continuing Education department** and the **Theatre Arts program at Helena High**. A huge **thank you to Committee Members, Jane Ogle, Jan Wilson, Pearl Allen and Robert Holter** for all their hard work in preparing for the Conference. I also would like to express gratitude to our sponsors for their support, **Humanities Montana, Opportunity Bank, Sullivan Financial Group** and **The Day's Inn**, along with supporters from the Helena business community: the **Montana City Bank, the Firetower Coffeehouse, On Broadway** restaurant, and many more.

The free workshops that we've been presenting around Montana are supported by a **Strategic Investment Grant** from the **Montana Arts Council** and also promote MPN. One was held in **Bozeman** in partnership with **The Last Best Geri-Actors Company**, at the Senior Center on **September 8**; the second in **Havre** on **September 20** in **partnership** with the **Montana Actors Theatre** and **MSU-Northern**; the third will be **October 12 at the Library in Lewistown** and **partnered with the Lewistown Art Center and the Judith Mountain Players**; and the fourth is **October 19 at the MEA/MFT Annual Conference in Missoula**. In behalf of MPN, I offer our **sincere gratitude** to the **Montana Arts Council** for this critical and much appreciated support.

We also **welcome several new members to the Montana Playwrights Network!** Some of our members are **featured in this newsletter on page 7**.

A unique partnership that created the Montana Playwrights Conference!



ATTENTION: Members of the Montana Playwrights Network

Plan on attending the first **Annual Membership Meeting on November 3 at 4:00 p.m.**

Members will vote on the **slate of officers**: Pamela Mencher: President; Robert Holter: Vice President; Janice Jamruska-Wilson: Secretary; and Pearl Allen: Treasurer.

We'll also **discuss the future activities and direction of MPN for 2018**, as well as have a chance to meet each other in person. Get involved in your organization!

Plan to Attend!

November 2, 2017

6:30 p.m. at Helena High's Theatre, a half block from Helena College.

Keynote Address Free to the Public

Featuring internationally renowned playwright & inspirational speaker,

James Still

Following the Keynote Address:

“Montana Tales”

Featuring a storytelling performance by Indian Education Specialist, Michael Jetty;

**and entertaining Reader's Theatre performances of monologues, essays,
and short plays based upon the 'Montana Experience' written by
members of the Montana Playwrights Network.**

**“Montana Tales” is open to the public; admission fee: \$10
Montana Playwrights Conference attendees are admitted free
with a Conference Pass. For reservations and more information,
Call 406-235-0353.**

Congratulations to Montana Playwrights Network members for their works selected to be in the first performance of Montana Tales!

Joanne Morris Gores' monologue: Jona's Mother. Jona reveals familial relationships that lead her to a life-changing decision.

Janice Jamruszka-Wilson's short play: Justice in the Cross Hairs. A novice game warden encounters a poacher and faces a distressing choice.

Pamela Mencher's short play: Calamity Jane's Dilemma. A young Calamity Jane wrestles with a timeless situation that has confronted many women throughout history.

Linda Nelson's essay: Am I Really a Montanan? What does it take to be considered a “real” Montanan?

Steve Palmer's monologue: Ghosts of the Old West. An old-timer muses about the effects of the Vigilantes in the Montana Territory when outlaws took the law into their own hands.

Tom Pearson's monologue: Maria Wright Boyce. Maria recounts personal events that influenced the history of the United States and Montana from the 1800's to the present day.

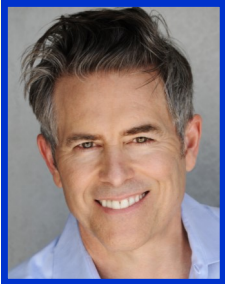
Cynthia M. Webb's short play, Driver's Ed. This comedy explores a contemporary mother-daughter relationship incorporating an unusual theatrical convention.

Montana Playwrights Conference UPDATE!

Save the dates: November 2, 3, 2017
At Helena College in Helena, MT

Conference Workshops:

Scriptwriting Techniques for Creative Writing & Master Class in Playwriting Keynote Presenter, James Still



James is an inspiring speaker, and his work has been produced throughout the world. His plays have been nominated four times for the Pulitzer Prize, and have been developed at prestigious institutions such as Robert Redford's Sundance, the New Harmony Project, Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference, and many others. Three of his plays have received the Distinguished Play Award from the American Alliance for Theatre & Education. James is the Resident Playwright at Indiana Repertory Theatre, and an Artistic Affiliate at American Blues Theatre in Chicago. **His workshops** offer practical techniques to use in creative writing, and an inspiring examination of successful playwriting.

Beyond Sex, Drugs and Rock 'N' Roll: The Science of Playwriting in the 21st Century Associate Keynote Presenter, Dr. Xan Johnson



Xan has been a leading keynote presenter at state, regional, national and international venues sharing research focusing on the relationship between Child Drama and Social Cognitive Neuroscience. Currently, along with science researchers, Xan received significant grants to initiate a theatre intervention program in 2016 seeking to increase social cognition and theory of mind skills in young people living in the autism spectrum. **His workshop** shows that social cognitive neuroscientists are becoming willing partners with playwrights and theatre artists in the quest to unravel, sophisticate and teach the art of social interaction through child and adult play forms and social rituals (including live theatre and experimental media).

Improvistional Story-Writing and Resolving Conflict Through Story Presenter, Greg Owens



Greg's primary teaching interest is the application of creative principles and process to real-world projects of social purpose; supporting people of all ages as they develop, by practicing, the skills to make things that help, impact, and empower others. **His workshops** use basic improvisational principles and techniques to free creativity; and also explore different ways of using principles of dramatic writing and scene-building to better understand and improve interpersonal communication at work and in life.

FIND MORE WORKSHOPS & PRESENTERS ON PAGE FIVE!

Montana Playwrights Conference UPDATE!

More Conference Workshops:



Maintaining and Revitalizing Cultural Identity Through Oral Traditions Presenter, Michael Jetty

Mike is an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Dakota Nation and a Turtle Mountain Chippewa descendant. He works at the Montana Office of Public Instruction as an Indian Education Specialist. **His workshop** explores how Identity is an issue with which human beings struggle throughout their lifetime. Questions of “Who am I?” and “How do I fit in?” are universal questions of the human condition. Even larger issues of “Who is an Indian/Tribal Member?” exist among Indian people themselves. Mike also discusses how oral traditions continue to impact and shape American Indian cultural identities.



Performance Techniques in Storytelling Presenters, Jud Harmon & Tony Mannen

Jud has been performing on stage for most of his life. His love of the craft and mastery of characterization is evident whenever he takes the stage as an actor or teacher. Tony has spent more than half his life in a theatre performing, directing, teaching and mentoring performers. He spent 38 years teaching speech and theatre at The College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls, Idaho. **Their workshop** offers hands-on training in performance methods for actors, storytellers and teachers.



Story in the Classroom Presenters, Janice Jamruszka-Wilson & Robert Holter

Jan's career in education spans 33 years teaching French and Spanish in Montana and planning foreign study and travel experiences. She was also an Indian Education Coordinator in Helena Public Schools. Robert has taught for nearly 3 decades at Helena High School, and also has presented theater industry workshops as well as worked in film and television. **Their workshop** covers how a theater teacher and a Spanish teacher use story to drive teaching and learning in their classrooms, and offers practical exercises for others to incorporate in theirs.



Improve Health, Communication & Business Through Story Presenter, Pamela Mencher

Pamela's work as a college professor, public speaker, playwright, author and theatre artist spans over 4 decades, and she continues to work in all these fields, among others. Currently, she wears a variety of hats in serving MPN, and writes stories, books, plays and paints pictures in her spare time. **Her workshop** offers a broad spectrum of applications of Story in relation to personal health and wellbeing, improving interpersonal communication, and how to integrate Story to be more effective in the work place.



MORE CONFERENCE INFORMATION ON THE NEXT PAGE!

Montana Playwrights Conference UPDATE!



Stay at the Conference Hotel,
a short distance from Helena College!

The Day's Inn
2001 Prospect Avenue in Helena.

Call **406-442-3280** before **October 26, 2017** to receive the Montana Playwrights Network rate: **\$89 + tax per night**. They have a free breakfast every morning.

We sincerely thank our sponsors & supporters of the first
Montana Playwright Conference!

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“Serving Montana Communities since 1922 and still growing.”

Also, these
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And others...

Meet some MPN Members!



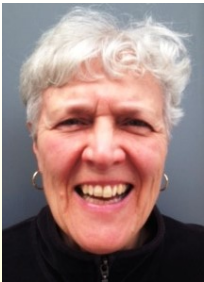
Joanne Morris Gores: Once I discovered the relationship between mental strength and writing, my focus on dialogue seemed unstoppable. I have grown to love playwriting. It is a great combination of movement, voice and word that is accessible to all. I continue to use writing as expression and motivation to research the esoteric. I confess; theater is in my blood. My lineage is laced with theatrical performers. Playwriting seems my best device and live performance is not required (of me).



Leah Joki is an actor, writer and director. She has extensively taught in prison and was profiled in *The Los Angeles Times*, *American Theatre Magazine* and *The LA Weekly*. Credits include writing and performing *PRISON BOXING*, nominated for best Solo Performance in Los Angeles; her memoir, *Juilliard to Jail*, is in development with Joe Manganiello's company; and plays include *The Year of Baldwin*, *Sheets*, *The Poppovichs*, *The Big Picture* and *Time Will Tell*. Recently she devised and directed *FATHERS AND SONS* with inmates in a maximum-security prison.



Linda Nelson is now retired, but she has served as a Registered Drama Therapist, as well as a high school and college instructor in English, drama, and drama therapy. She is the co-author of *Drama and the Adolescent Journey*. She is also a published poet. She is a firm believer in the healing power of storytelling.



Jane Ogle currently serves as the Regional Representative for MPN for the central region. She earned a BA in Interpersonal Communication and an MA in Communication Studies from the University of Montana. She has taught classes in communication, genealogy, and public speaking; and is a writer in several genres. She now funds a scholarship in the University of Montana's Communication Studies program for graduate students, and also volunteers for the League of Women Voters.



Ross Peter Nelson was awarded a 2017 writer's residency at Can Serrat (near Barcelona), and is spending the month of October there, beginning a new play in fulfillment of the scholarship requirements. Last month, he was in Florida for the Gulfshore New Works Festival, where *Tycho's Fool* was a featured selection. Last year saw the premier of *Becoming Number Six* in New Orleans, and a prize-winning production of *Zoloft Tango* in Spokane.



Steve Palmer, in September, Steve performed his full length, one man play, *BOXED*, at the UNITED SOLO FEST in New York City, the largest solo performance festival in the world. *BOXED* debuted in Helena in 2015 at The Last Chance New Play Fest in Helena. In 2016 he also performed two other solo works: *CAT AND SMOKE*, and, *SHEEP STORIES*, story telling based on memories living on a sheep ranch in the 1960's.

Helena College Continuing Education



Supporting creativity in our community



Host of the first Montana Playwrights Conference in November 2017.

Visit our website for more information on class offerings.



Your talent could be our next class! We would love to hear your ideas.

www.umhelena.edu/continuinged, email ce@umhelena.edu or call Mary Lannert at 406-447-6945.



Supporting the arts in Helena.

Please consider Helena College Foundation in your philanthropic giving.

www.helenacollegefoundation.org

It's a Party!

Announcing a festive reunion for all **RMTA family, friends & guests** from around the Rocky Mountain Region.



Save the date: November 3, 2017, in Helena, Montana.

For more information, and to RSVP, contact Pamela Mencher at MontanaPlaywrights@gmail.com



We've been continuing to organize our first RMTA Reunion Party and have some information to share:

- ◆ **Our Reunion Party Hotel** is the same as the **Montana Playwrights Conference Hotel: the Day's Inn** on Prospect Avenue in Helena, just a short distance from the party. **Book your room by October 26, 2017**, and ask for the Montana Playwrights Network rate. Their number is **406-442-3280**. The rate is \$89 per night + tax. They also serve a great free breakfast every morning.
- ◆ **Plan to attend a one-night only performance on November 3 of "Barrymore's Ghost"**, directed and produced by **Tony Mannen**, and starring **Jud Harmon**. (RMTA Trivia Question: When was this magnificent show performed at an RMTA Festiventon, and where?) The performance will be in the **Helena High School Theatre** and **curtain is at 7:00 p.m.** The party starts shortly after the performance. (To get directions to the party, contact Pamela Mencher at montanaplaywrights@gmail.com, or call 406-235-0353.)
- ◆ **Visit our website: www.MontanaPlaywrights.org for updates** on the Conference and RMTA Reunion Party and share this information with your RMTA family, friends and colleagues!

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 information that's not longer than 80 words (or so) and we'll include it in the next MPN News issue to come out in January, 2018.
- Keep your eye on our website for more information about the **Montana Playwrights Conference, Meet & Greet** get-togethers around our great State in 2018.
- 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, joining the Network, or attending the Montana Playwrights Conference in November at Helena College. It promises to be educational, inspiring and entertaining for everyone!

Food for Thought -- The Importance of Story

"...stories are important to people, politics, and education. Stories are how people make sense of themselves and their worlds. In young children's spontaneous stories that they act out as they play, we can see how they believe people relate to one another, who they hope to become, and how they will behave. We can see adolescents play roles in their own and other people's stories in order to figure out where they fit into their ever-expanding worlds. As adults, the true and imaginary stories we wish to tell and believe suggest what we value most in this world. In a real sense, stories make people.

For this reason, stories are political. Whose stories get told? What can those stories mean? Who benefits from their telling? These are political questions because they address the ways in which people's identities -- their beliefs, attitudes, and values -- are created and maintained. These identities determine how we live together in and out of schools as much as school rules or governmental laws." (Shannon, 1995, p. xi)

From: Shannon, P. (1995). Text, lies, and videotape: Stories about life, literacy, and learning. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.