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www.MontanaPlaywrights.org

**Montana
Playwrights
Network**



MPN News

The official newsletter of the Montana Playwrights Network

Inside this issue:

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Pamela Mencher

Greetings from the President

It's a new year, and the Montana Playwrights Network is going strong! MPN is now in its 4th year, and is looking forward to moving into our new home, the Helena Avenue Theatre (HAT) very soon. (Check out the photo update of remodeling space to become the HAT on page 3 of this issue.)

2019 was a good year for our members and the organization. In addition to partnering with the Montana Actors Theatre in Havre and the Downtown Dance Collective in Missoula in the first Montana Premiere Project featuring original works by Montana playwrights, MPN also produced the *Queen City Roundup for Cowboy Poets, Playwrights & Storytellers* in Helena. MPN continued to make new connections throughout Montana in 2019, and is looking forward to joining with yet more individuals and organizations in launching new partnerships and exploring our state's diverse communities through get-togethers, workshops and other special events in 2020. Previews of 2020 MPN events and opportunities can be found in this issue on pages 5 & 6.

I would also like to offer thanks and recognition to our many generous donors who stepped up to help us in support of the creation of the HAT! These dozens of individuals, businesses and organizations will be honored on our donor wall in the theatre, or upon attractive plaques displayed in the lobby. You are invited to attend our Open House reception on April 4 from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. at 1319 Helena Avenue (across from the new Vanilla Bean). We'll be conducting tours and offer refreshments and entertainment for your enjoyment. So, put it on your calendar and plan to stop in to see Helena's newest performing arts facility!

Our annual membership drive is going well. If you haven't renewed for 2020 yet, please do so via our website or by mail. Go to the membership tab on the website for instructions. Don't delay, renew today!



**The HAT
in progress!**



We're excited to share a progress report of the Helena Avenue Theatre in pictures. We'll soon have a fully equipped 73 seat theatre; two spacious dressing rooms; green room; costume and properties studios; equipment storage; control booth; and a fund-raising space called the *Hat Box* that will be open before and during intermissions at performances. Anticipated opening is slated for early April, 2020!



The HAT in November, 2019



The HAT in January, 2020



The HAT in January, 2020



The HAT in January, 2020

2019 MPN Highlights!

MPN 2019 Montana Premiere Project

This exciting project began in 2018 with three Montana performing arts companies screening script submissions by MPN members. These companies then chose scripts to produce as part of their 2019 seasons in partnership with MPN.

The first appeared in October, 2019, and was produced in **Havre** by the **Montana Actors' Theatre**. Directed by Andi Daniel, the *Vorbit Incident*, a comedy written by Missoula playwright, Jay Kettering was very well received by the sold-out crowds in attendance.



The **Missoula** production appeared in November, 2019, at the **Downtown Dance Collective**. It featured *The Poppovichs* by playwright, Leah Joki, and was produced by Heather Adams. This bittersweet comedy featured compelling actors from outside Missoula as well as local talent and was well attended by rapt audiences.

The third Montana performing arts company involved in MPN's Montana Premiere Project was originally scheduled to perform at the HAT in Helena in December, 2019. However, unavoidable construction delays postponed the production until April, 2020. (More details on the next page.)



- ◆ MPN also produced the “**Queen City Roundup**” in April, 2019 in Helena, and featured two days of workshops, a play performance starring local talent, stories by Mike Jetty and music and comedy by Judy Williams and the Divine Bovines. Featured cowboy poets were Gwen Peterson, Jim Hamilton and Margaret Wilhelm.
- ◆ Workshop: **Let's Make a Movie**, presented by Cynthia M. Webb and Pamela Mencher at Helena College in December.

2020 MPN Highlights!



Two members of the
Top Hat Players!

FROM PAGE TO STAGE

This ongoing MPN project consists of different age groups brought together to explore various topics such as acting, playwriting, play production, and storytelling. The first group was formed in October, 2019, and dubbed themselves the **Top Hat Players**. The Players are currently working on a music video, plans for the HAT's Open House reception, and other special events.

Preview of Events at the HAT in 2020!

How The West Was Fun!

An old-fashioned melodrama plus a 19th century Olivo Show in the spirit of the Old West.

June 18 - August 2

HAT Summer Training Program

Classes in Playwriting,
Acting, Improvisation,
Musical Theatre & Theatre Technology
for Youth & Adults

Community Shows at the HAT!

Last Chance New Play Festival

Produced in November by the
Experimental Theatre Cooperative

Diamond Destinations
diamonddestinations.world

More events to be announced.



Bards of the Big Sky

Bards of the Big Sky
is the **Gala Grand Opening** production
for the **HAT** in Helena and is part of the first
MPN Montana Premiere Project.

(See page 4)

Provided all continues to go well with the construction of MPN's new home at the **HAT**, performances are slated for **April 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 2020**.

Bards of the Big Sky features **Driver's Ed** by Cynthia M. Webb; **Flotsam, Jetsam & Bill** by Jay Kettering, and **Montana Fish Story** by Pamela Mencher. The evening also includes **original music** performed by composer and musician, **Steven Gores** and a special appearance of the **Top Hat Players**.

Information will be posted on MPN's website on the new page dedicated to the HAT and goes live as of February 15, 2020.

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
- **March, 2020.**
- 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.

Call for Plays!

MPN members are invited to submit original plays for the 2nd MPN Montana Premiere Project!

Scripts accompanied by the MPN Submission Form may be sent beginning February 15, 2020, by the deadline, April 30, 2020.

Project details and submission guidelines will be sent to current MPN members and posted on the MPN website by February 15, 2020.

Plays will be selected by participating Montana theatres for production in 2021.

Montana Playwrights Network Board of Directors

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Wishing You the Best in 2020!
(Some of the Top Hat Players)