

Volume I: Issue 5  
April, 2018

[www.MontanaPlaywrights.org](http://www.MontanaPlaywrights.org)

# MPN News

The official newsletter of the Montana Playwrights Network



## Montana Playwrights Network Board of Directors

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South End: Jessie Sherman

Northern Highlands:  
Jay Pyette

## Inside this Issue:

### *Network Announcements*

*May 5: 2018 Writer's Challenge in Helena*

*June 8 & 9 New Play Festival in Bozeman*

*Introducing the Verge Theater*

*& Montana Actors Theatre*

*And more...*

**2018 is off to a great start!** We are busy preparing for the **MPN Writer's Challenge** beginning May 5 in the East Helena City Hall meeting room (upstairs), and culminating on September 15 in Helena. **Details** on this event are on **page 3 & 4** of this issue. Check it out and plan to join us! It's free to MPN members, and open to the public.

Plan to join us in Bozeman at MPN's partnership event with the Verge Theater; the **Montana Playwrights Festival: Spotlight on Process, June 8 & 9**. This new annual theatre festival **features staged readings** of works written **by Montana Playwrights Network** members, **Steven Palmer, Leah Joki, Pamela Mencher, and Cynthia Webb**. Playwright **Shira Hereld's** work will also be featured. **Ms. Hereld** will be presenting a **workshop** in addition to **Greg Owens** and **Pamela Mencher** at this exciting new play festival.

# Greetings from the President



We are pleased to **highlight MPN's Regional Representatives** of the **MPN Board of Directors** on the **back page of this issue**. In addition to **Jane Ogle**, MPN's Central Regional Representative and **Leah Joki**, the Western Slope Representative, we welcome **Jessie Sherman** of the Verge Theater in Bozeman as the "South End" Representative, and **Jay Pyette** of the Montana Actors Theatre who represents the "Northern Highlands" in Havre. We are currently searching for a Representative for the "Eastern Front" region of Montana, encompassing the Eastern side of our great State. If you are interested, or would like to recommend someone, please don't hesitate to contact me.

I'd like to remind you that **MPN News** is also a voice for MPN members. Please send us news of any writer's successes you've achieved, or any upcoming events that you would like us to feature on the back page in **Post Scripts**. The next issue is due out in August, so please send your news by July 31, 2018.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the **2018 MPN Writer's Challenge** in Helena, and at MPN's partnership event: the Verge Theater's **Montana Playwrights Festival: Spotlight on Process, June 8 & 9**. For more information, and to register for this first new play festival in Bozeman: go to [www.vergetheater.com](http://www.vergetheater.com).

I also am pleased to announce an **upcoming opportunity** for Montana playwrights: the **2019 MPN Rolling Premiere Project**. MPN will partner with four theatre venues in Montana to host and produce original works by Montana Playwrights! Confirmed partners include the Verge Theater in Bozeman, the Montana Actors Theatre in Havre, a theatre in Helena, and one yet to be determined. The **deadline for script submissions for this project is September 15, 2018**. Watch our web site for more details, including submission guidelines. **Guidelines will be available by June 1, 2018**. You must be a current MPN member to submit your work, so if you're not already a member, join today by following the link on our home page at **[www.MontanaPlaywrights.org](http://www.MontanaPlaywrights.org)**.

If you have any **questions about the Montana Playwrights Network** or any of our activities, please don't hesitate to contact me at:  
**[montanaplaywrights@gmail.com](mailto:montanaplaywrights@gmail.com)**



# 2018 Writer's Challenge

## What is the 2018 Writer's Challenge?

This exciting event offered by the Montana Playwrights Network (MPN) will be in the Helena area on May 5 and September 15.

The May 5th session features three inspirational and practical workshops offered by regional professionals, (see opposite) as well as a short session introducing the terms of the 2018 Writer's Challenge. This unique occasion will challenge participants to create original works in poetry, short stories, essays, non-fiction, memoirs, short plays, cowboy poetry, music and storytelling. All participating entries will be adjudicated by a panel of experts who will also choose a variety of these works to be presented publicly in the second phase on September 15.\*

This exclusive opportunity is open to everyone, and is free to current members of the Montana Playwrights Network. (Members will need to pay a \$10 refreshment fee for lunch, beverages and snacks for the May 5th event.) The registration fee for non-members is \$45 for all events offered on May 5th and includes refreshments available throughout the day.

For the public performances on September 15, admission for all attendees is \$10. To register, for both events, go to MPN's website at [www.MontanaPlaywrights.org](http://www.MontanaPlaywrights.org) and click the button labeled 2018 Events on the home page and follow the link.

Questions? Send an email to: [montanaplaywrights@gmail.com](mailto:montanaplaywrights@gmail.com).

## Everyone is welcome. Sign up today!

\*Selected works illustrating the 'Montana Experience' and submitted in the 2018 Writer's Challenge will also be considered for MPN's ongoing 'Montana Monologues' project.



# May 5th Events!

## INSPIRING & PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS!

### *Take Your Writing to the Next Level*

"There's a whole market waiting to devour new books, movies, and plays. This workshop will help you develop your writing so that it gets noticed. Poets, playwrights, and novelists alike are sure to find something that will help their writing reach its full potential. Through the various exercises and discussions, you'll be given plenty of tools and tips to take home."



**Mindy Finden** is a professional editor and senior technical writer. She has more than 20 years experience in writing and editing for companies across the United States. Mindy has a Master's in Education with a passion for helping new authors get their start. She has been teaching the popular class, "So You Want to Write a Book" since the spring of 2016.

### *Your Life...Is Your Story!*

"Following the school of thought, "Write what you know!" actor, writer and director **Leah Joki** leads a workshop on how to build a play utilizing your most significant resource; your own life experiences."



**Leah Joki** 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 the play FATHERS AND SONS with inmates in a maximum-security prison.

### *After You Write A Play...*

"Your script is done; what's next? Find out what contemporary playwrights, actors, producers, designers and directors at all levels need to know about the steps between writing a script and final production. This workshop offers practical advice and methods of navigating the process of new play development."



**Pamela Jamruszka Mencher** is a producer, director, playwright and college professor. She now spends her time writing, painting, sewing and presenting workshops throughout Montana, and serving as President of the Montana Playwrights Network. Her plays have been produced throughout the United States, and recently published *Acting Skills for Life and Work*, a book for those interested in applying acting skills in everyday life.

**Seating is limited! Register today at [www.MontanaPlaywrights.org](http://www.MontanaPlaywrights.org)**

# Introducing MPN's newest Member Theatre Companies!



**Verge Theater is a black box in Bozeman, MT. Our mission is to create offbeat, thought provoking, heart-inspiring theater and theater education that is masterful in execution, empowering to children, teens and adults, and evocative of our vibrant local community. Central to this mission is our passion for working with playwrights to support and develop their craft, and to stage new works to inspire and challenge our audience.**

**For information about THE VERGE'S MONTANA PLAYWRIGHT'S FESTIVAL (June 8-9):  
SPOTLIGHT ON PROCESS; contact Jessie Sherman AT [Jessie@vergetheater.com](mailto:Jessie@vergetheater.com)**



**The Montana Actors' Theatre (MAT) is a regional, non-profit theatre company operating in North Central Montana. Mainstage shows, children's and youth programs, regional collaboration and educational outreach are all part of MAT's identity. MAT strives to provide cultural opportunities to a large, rural, underserved region comprised of an extremely diverse population. Our aim is to create inclusive experiences through theatre, while partnering with and supporting other disciplines. Our Mission Statement reads, in part, that we create "... an ensemble of people, actors and audience alike, to tell the story of humanity in all its diversity." Currently, MAT produces a nine-month, eight-show mainstage season with wide-ranging productions. From large-scale musicals to cutting-edge dramas to original works, we offer something for everyone. Education and enlightenment, through entertainment, is our ultimate goal.**

# 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 **August, 2018**.
- If you want a **copy of MPN's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws**, just send a note to: [montanaplaywrights@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.MontanaPlaywrights.org).

## Meet MPN'S Regional Representatives!



Leah Joki

### Western Slope Representative

See Leah's bio on page 4 of this issue!



Jane Ogle

**Central Region Representative:** Jane 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.



Jay Pyette

**Northern Highlands Representative:** Jay is the Artistic Director for the Montana Actors' Theatre and has been with the company since its founding in 1992. His experience ranges from acting to directing to tech theatre, as well as playwriting. His script, *The Dead of Winter*, played in London's Union Theatre for a month to strong reviews. *Rugburns*, a farce, toured Montana and is currently playing in dinner theatres in Northern Montana. His screenplay, *Rosaries*, was filmed by filmDioynsia. Jay also serves on the Executive Committee of the Montana Arts' Council.



Jessie Sherman

**South End Representative:** Jessie is Programs Director at Verge Theater in Bozeman and grew up in Montana. In Teen Theater at Verge, she discovered her passion for performing and the collaborative process. Jessie earned a BA in Theatre Arts and English from the University of Minnesota, and an MA in Applied Theatre: Drama in Communities and Drama Education from the Royal Central School of Speech & Drama at the University of London. She has taught theater for all ages ranging from 4 to 94, and in diverse communities including the Flathead Reservation in Montana and in Tamil Nadu, India.