

TAWAS BAY PLAYERS

September/October 2020



CURTAIN CALLS

CURTAIN CALLS is published semi-occasionally for the TAWAS BAY PLAYERS!



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TBP ANNUAL MEETING ADDRESSES OUR FUTURE

The Tawas Bay Players annual membership meeting was held on August 7th at Dewey Durant Park. Due to the pandemic situation, there wasn't much to talk about, but it was important to let our members know where we are and where we'll be.

President Keith Frank called the meeting to order at 6:43 pm. All Board members were in attendance.

The minutes from the 2019 annual meeting were read aloud. One correction was noted: Laurie Jacot had been elected to a one year term, not a two-year term as stated.

Pat Casey presented the Treasurer's Report. Given the unusual circumstances of the season, she explained that refunds were given to patrons when possible for the shortened season. She also told the attendees that there will be no ads or season ticket sales this year.

June Hudgins, our Membership Chairperson, reported that in 2019-2020 we had 123 members. There were about 30 people in attendance, and they all renewed their membership. Some people bought several memberships (i.e., for absent family members), so that final number will be a little higher.

We heard from Pat Casey again, this time on the current status off the Tawas Bay Players Singers. Our traveling singing group performed a lot during the 2019 Christmas season, and their traditional Christmas concert was well-received. Due to the pandemic, she has had to turn down performing at the Iosco County Fair and the Art Stroll. And erring on the slide of caution,

(Continued on next page)



TBP ANNUAL MEETING (Continued)

there will not be a Christmas Songs and Stories concert this year. Pat has new music ready for 2021.

Keith presented his President's Report (items of interest from the past year). An amendment to our By-Laws was enacted in order to accommodate virtual meeting and remote attendance to for the Board of Directors meetings only. The Board made this change at their July meeting, and the official wording goes as follows:

Section 5: The Board of Directors shall meet a minimum of six (6) times a year. Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of the President or by one-third of the Directors. Board members attend any and all meetings of the Board of Directors in person, remotely or virtually. Board members attending remotely or virtually may not be counted toward meeting quorum except when the entire meeting is being held virtually.

Jolene Grusecki reported on our first theatrical collaboration with the High School, *Virgil's Wedding*. The production and the collaboration was a successful one, but the timing was unfortunate; the COVID-19 statewide shutdown began during its opening weekend, resulting in its cancellation after dress rehearsal and one half-capacity performance. The show made \$200; TBP donated their half back to the school drama department.

In other recaps, the 2020 Perchville Murder Mystery event was cancelled, and Sue Duncan and Sharon Langley hosted a lighting workshop for members in February.

The topic turned to the current pandemic issue and how it affects our upcoming activities. The TBP Board of Directors' March, April and May meetings were cancelled due to COVID-19. **All activity is cancelled at the theater until further notice.**

Dates and times of future activity is up in the air as Governor Whitmer has mandated via her Executive Order 2020-160 that theaters remain closed. We hope to return to normal soon but not until the Governor allows us to open. As you can imagine, this makes scheduling any shows (when and if they happen) very tricky.

Michal Jacot reported on our newsletter; he is using it as a vehicle to keep all of our members updated despite the lack of activity. Any contributions for the newsletter from members, as always, are welcome.

Future plans are tentative at best. We will have a very abbreviated season due to COVID-19. There will be no season ticket sales this year. The fall show and Christmas Songs and Stories will not be held due to the pandemic. Basically, anything that was planned for the remainder of 2020 is off the table.

For 2021, we are hoping to re-launch those shows that didn't survive the shutdown. It can't be stated enough that nothing is written in stone; we have no idea how long restrictions will continue.

Tentative performance dates for a re-launch of *Virgil's Wedding* are March 18-21, 2021. Barb Hunter will direct, with producing chores handled by Stacy Perrot and Jolene Grusecki.

Tentative performance dates for *Messiah on the Frigidaire* will be April 30, May 1-2 and May 6-9. Beth Borowski is still on board to direct.

Tentative dates for *I Love Lacy* are July 9-11, July 15-18, 2021. Michal Jacot will be directing, with Judy Quarters producing.

The Fall play for October 2021 is still to be determined.

Suggestions for the 2021 annual meeting were discussed. Ray Skiver brought up the notion of having more group events like we did in our earlier days. He suggested a picnic, as well as other fun summer activities like canoeing.

Following this was our election of Board Members, with three 3-year seats open. The three incumbents, Laurie Jacot, Chris Mundy and Stacy Perrot were re-elected.

The Founder's Award was another TBP tradition that became a victim of COVID-19. Because of the shortened season, no award was given.

Stacy Perrot has passed along a list of suggestions to the Board from Ed Krebs on ways to

improve our theatre lighting quality and safety for members that are setting lights. The Board will follow up on their suggestions.

Chris Mundy mows our lawn but requested help on the chore. If you are able and the lawn is long, please jump in and mow it, and Chris promises he won't get mad at you for it! There is no lawnmower at the Playhouse so you must bring your own.

Our annual meeting was adjourned at 7:27 pm.

TBP Members In Local Band

Some people just needed to get out of the house, enjoy the summer evening, and take in some music. August 14 gave them just what they were looking for.

Two free concerts by Muddy and the Mortars and Liquid Chicken (insider tip: they're both the same guys. As Muddy, they do original songs; they do covers as Liquid Chicken) entertained audiences in the afternoon and again in the evening.

The bands are comprised of five young men, two of who are seasoned Tawas Bay Players! Neil Peterson and Brady Jacot both lend their musical and vocal skills to the groups. Neil plays guitar and sings many of the songs; his rendition of "Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" was a show-stopper. Brady played drums (and at one point did a rocking drum solo that got everyone going), did some vocals (including an original rap), and handled announcing and general in-between-songs-patter duties.

Other band members include Cody Bellows (singer and songwriter), Stuart Werner (master of the one-string guitar!), and Bryce Moon (who delivered a stunning saxophone solo).

The guys did a great job, presenting a wide range of musical styles and, as you would expect, a lot of laughs. Kudos to Muddy and the Mortars and Liquid Chicken for the entertainment, and for showcasing two of our talented young members!



*Muddy and the Mortars, aka Liquid Chicken (left to right):
Brady Jacot, Bryce Moon, Neil Peterson,
Cody Bellows, and Stuart Werner*

Just Talkin'

By Michal Jacot

Without a doubt, this has been a challenging year for businesses, civic organizations, and volunteer groups. The Tawas Bay Players are not alone. I have contacted friends from other theater groups to ask about their plans and have gotten the same response from all of them. Everyone seems to be at a standstill.

To make things even more difficult, the situation is very fluid; it changes rapidly, making any long-range planning hard.

So let's brainstorm. This is your chance to think outside the box and maybe come up with something we haven't thought of. All ideas are worth looking into. Maybe you have one or two. Maybe they'd work, maybe they wouldn't, but the only bad idea is the one that isn't voiced.

So let's first look at our obstacles.

Due to the current restrictions (which may or may not change by the time you read this), the cast and crew can't rehearse or perform a show in the theatre. This isn't optional, this is a governmental mandate.

Gatherings are limited to 100 people. This includes the cast and crew, reducing audience numbers.

If we do a public (i.e., outside) performance, (a) we're at the mercy of Michigan weather, and (b) unless it's on private property, anyone can watch, which means selling tickets is not an option, which means no guaranteed income for the show. And as far as that "private property" thing goes, I'm no expert but I'll bet there'd be some legalities to consider for that. Also, keep in mind that an outdoor performance in Michigan is not viable all year round; can you imagine an audience wanting to sit outside for an hour or two in January?!

Those are the main obstacles we are looking at, and you can see that putting a show together the standard way right now is not feasible. I've put some thought into this, and here are some ideas to toss around. There may be problems I had not thought of, but at least it can get you all thinking.

A one-man or one-woman monologue show. One actor could practice their lines and blocking at home. They would have to direct themselves, or perhaps have a spouse or someone else in that person's pod to direct and/or assist them. The actor would provide their own costumes and props. Since the show would not be in the theater, lighting would not be needed.

The show would be performed at an outside public venue (i.e., park, parking lot, empty lot, field). Perhaps a business with a large parking lot such as Neiman's would be willing to cordon off a section for chairs and a stage. Again, being surrounded by lakes makes Michigan's weather notoriously unpredictable; even discounting obvious things like rainstorms, any strong breeze will drown out an actor's voice. A clip-on-lapel mic would be a must. Chairs can be set apart for social distancing.

There would be no way to prevent "walk ins" or onlookers. Maybe charge a nominal fee for one of the chairs in the roped-off audience area? That way you can watch the show for free if you're willing to stand outside the perimeter. Beyond that, you can always try putting out a donation jar and hope for the best.

Similarly, a **show featuring several monologues** might work. Actors would self-direct, then meet for the performance. Actors needn't meet each other on stage and sets would be kept simple.

Penny Zacharias has been exploring the idea of **reader's theatre**. The cast members can rehearse via Zoom, or even by conference call. This, too, can be done outside like the above suggestions.

Finally, there is the possibility of a **radio show**. The cast can rehearse via Zoom; with proper precautions, a smaller cast could gather around a table at someone's home with a shared microphone in the center. Instead of a live performance, the cast and sound effects people could record the show (with the aid of a competent recording techie). The show could then be put on flash drive and given to the radio station, where they could play it (multiple times if they wish).

Granted, we're doing the show for free, but it gets the TBP name out in the public arena and that's not a bad thing.

Would any of these ideas work? It's hard to tell without a brainstorming session. And I'm sure that, as soon as people read these ideas, they'll say, "But Michal, you forgot this, and this, and this." And I probably have forgotten some details. But if we can at least start throwing ideas around we can see what will work and what doesn't. Do you

have any ideas of your own? I'd like to hear them.

Radio commentator Paul Harvey was fond of saying that sometimes the only difference between a problem and an opportunity is a point of view. The lull in activity that the pandemic has forced on us is an excellent chance to explore some new ideas, some new ways of presenting theater. Let's talk about opportunities!

Virgil's Wedding

The Musical



Virgil's Wedding Tries It Again!

By Jolene Grusecki

The TBP and Tawas Area H.S. Drama Club are partnering again this school year. The play *Virgil's Wedding* was cut short this past March due to school shutdown, so the advisors decided to try it again.

Tentative dates: March 18-21, 2021 at the playhouse.

This comedy is about a high-end wedding planner and her assistant who are hired to direct a simple ceremony for two of Lickskillet's favorite lovebirds; however, it becomes a coordinator's nightmare due to many mixed-up people and scenarios. We look forward to hosting this social clash of the century.

In 1988, we stepped into new theater territory by presenting a live radio broadcast! It was the 50th anniversary of the infamous WAR OF THE WORLDS broadcast, and we performed it live (sound effects and all) on WDBI-FM! That was a fun way to celebrate Halloween that year!

I wanted an eerie sound to depict the Martians, and choose a plastic toy similar to a vacuum cleaner tube; when swung overhead it produced a weird whistling noise that could change pitch depending on how fast the tube was swung. It was perfect (and people who heard it on the radio said it sounded incredible). Just as the Martians were starting to attack, I directed Val McMurray to "ramp it up", to swing the tube faster and faster to create a truly ominous noise. In the middle of the frantic swinging, the tube broke in two. The weird warning scream of the Martians was suddenly replaced with a sound that suggested a 60-year-old man trying to make it up a flight of stairs. The look on Val's face was priceless when she looked at the broken tube, then up to me, as if to say, "I just broke the Martian!" (*news article and photos follow!*)

TBP
RETRO

The Night The
MARTIANS
Came!

Audience applauds Tawas Players following 'War of the Worlds'



LIVE BROADCAST — Members of Tawas Bay Players are shown presenting the drama, "War of the Worlds," Halloween night. Actors include Greg Dahlstrom, center, and George Robson, left, with

Director Michal Jacot in center background and Don Backus, right, serving as the WDBI engineer. Other members of the cast await their cue at left. — NHP PHOTO

Nearly 100 people who were on hand at Tawas Bay Holiday Inn to listen and watch the live broadcast applauded the cast at the conclusion of the program.

The live broadcast of a drama was a first for Tawas Bay Players, according to Director Michal Jacot, and definitely a "first" for the local radio station, according to Don Backus of WDBI.

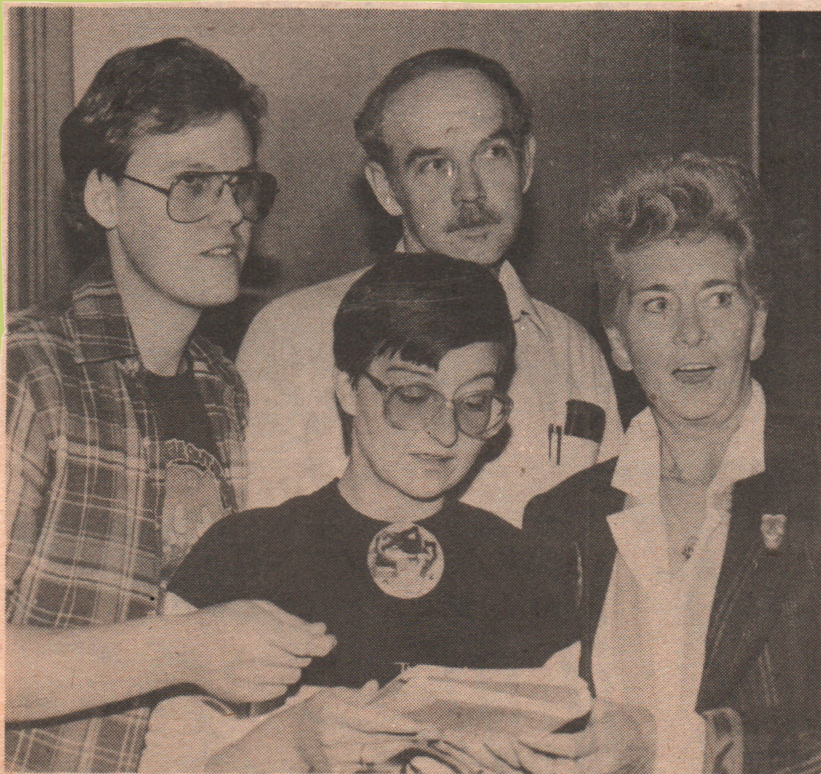
Michal Jacot is producer/director for Tawas Bay Players with Laurie Jacot as assistant producer/stage manager.

The cast of characters includes: Don Backus, first announcer; Jane Ruster, second announcer; Dennis Kirk, "Carl Phillips;" Greg Dahlstrom, "Professor Pierson;" Keith Frank, "Mr. Wilmuth/Operator No. 5;" Kim Siefert, "General Smith/Operator No. 3;" George Robson, "Policeman/Operator No. 4;"

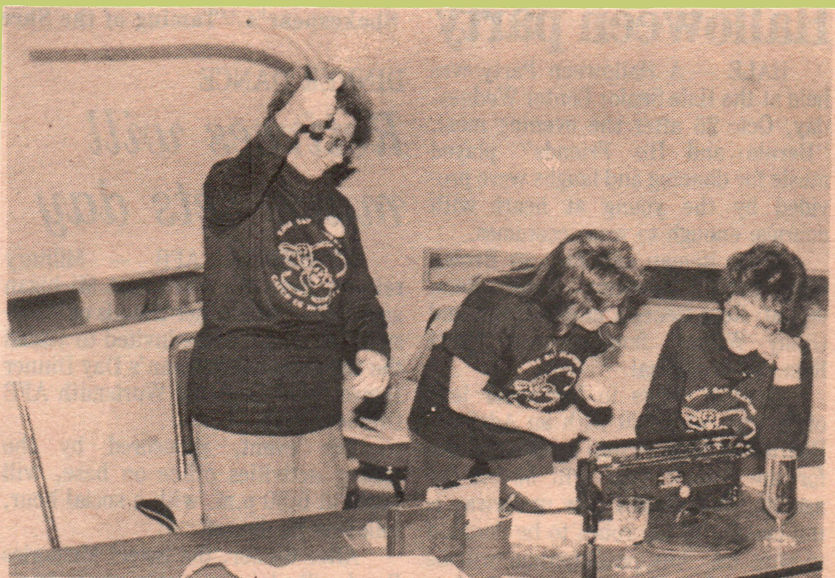
June Hudgins, "Harriet McDonald;" Tom O'Malley, "Captain Lansing;" George Birkam, "Secretary of the Interior;" Ron McMurray, "Officer;" Jim Estes, "Gunner;" Ralph Koschnitske, "observer;" Jim Davis, "commander;" Pam Davitz, "Operator No. 1;" Frank Mahon, "The Stranger."

Paula Gelin, Valerie McMurray and WDBI are in charge of sound effects management.

TBP
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IN REHEARSAL — Members of Tawas Bay Players are shown rehearsing for their live radio presentation Halloween night, Monday, Oct. 31, of "War of the Worlds." The original presentation 50 years ago by Orson Welles sent the nation into panic. From left are Director Michal Jacot, Stage Manager Laurie Jacot, Jim Estes and June Hudgins, both of whom have roles in the play. — NHP PHOTO



SOUND EFFECTS — Val McMurray, left, whirls a short length of plastic hose to create the sound of "Martian invaders" for Monday night's presentation of "War of the Worlds." Other members of the sound effects crew for Tawas Bay Players are Paul Gelin and Kay Robson, right. — NHP PHOTO

WHO ARE THESE CHILDREN???

Val McMurray (left) gets ready to break the Martian's neck, while Kay Robson (right) just looks perplexed.

Your next issue of **CURTAIN CALLS** will mysteriously appear right around Halloween! Until then, be safe!