



# CUELINES

## NOVEMBER EDITION

The board is fast at work putting together OCTA's 2024 conference where we will strive to "think outside the box". Themes and events will be released soon, so be on the look out to prepare your awesome costumes in time for August 30th.



Northeast Ohio is looking for new theatre members! Please reach out if you are interested in getting involved

	Automatic subscription to OCTA digital news	Reserved seat at State Conference	Patron Lounge at State Conference	Patron Conclerge	Reserved table at State Conference +7 guests to sit with them	Free Conference Pass
<b>ENCORE</b> (\$750-UP)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>2 Passes</b>
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<b>APPLAUSE</b> (\$50-\$99)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>				

**A NEW PATRON PROGRAM IS COMING TO OCTA**





BY BOB ABELMAN

“This performance of this funny murder mystery was our most successful fundraiser ever. We made \$28k on the event – almost 3x what we expected to yield – which enriched our facility and future programming. The community outreach it generated... Priceless.”

~Angela De Bernardo, President, Chagrin Valley Little Theatre/OCTA member

“The audience universally enjoyed participating in this murder mystery. From a production standpoint, we were able to put on the show on an empty stage with no significant set or complicated lighting/sound effects.”

~Helen Rizi, Producer, Chagrin Valley Little Theatre/OCTA member

These quotes reflect the most recent chapter of a rather unique page-to-stage story that started during the pandemic, when theaters were shuttered.

As a theater critic whose reviews of Cleveland-based community and professional playhouses appeared in newspapers throughout Northeast Ohio, I continued to write about theater – just not reviews and not for a newspaper. Instead, I became the author of a hilarious novella, titled *All the World's a Stage Fright: Misadventures of a Clandestine Critic*, about a theater critic named Asher Kaufman who talks a local professional company into casting him in a small role in its production of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* so he could write about the experience. During the production, he shares the stage with the classically trained actors he has panned in his reviews, faces the wrath of fellow critics angered by Asher's traitorous pursuit, and discovers an irrational, overriding, mind-numbing fear of iambic pentameter.

All this was inspired by the fact that, in London in the early 1600s when the Globe Theatre and other playhouses were shut down due to recurring bubonic plague outbreaks, a quarantined William Shakespeare did some of his best, most creative writing. And though his plays and sonnets were by no means a cure, they were a source of most welcome respite from the suffering.

Tony Award-winning actor John Rubinstein (*Pippin*, *Ragtime*) called *All the World's a Stage Fright* “... a hilarious, but true-to-life glimpse into the madcap and magical process of putting on a play.”

With the continued cancellation of theatrical productions due to the coronavirus variants, I wrote a comical Agatha Christie-style whodunit sequel, *Murder, Center Stage*, where Asher is acting in a local production of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* and finds himself in the middle of an

# FROM PAGE TO STAGE: THE MAKING OF A COMMUNITY THEATER FUNDRAISER

BY BOB ABELMAN

# CONTINUED

unscripted, onstage, opening night murder of the theater's artistic director. The police detective in charge of the case recruits Asher to be her cultural liaison, leaving the pair to figure out which of the cast and crew members committed the crime.

According to Rick Pender, theater critic at Cincinnati's CityBeat and author of The Stephen Sondheim Encyclopedia, "Bob Abelman's tale of theatrical mayhem with a bloody dose of Sondheim's Sweeney Todd will keep readers guessing about motives and machinations. The colorful characters keep the story moving. I suspect theater fans will give Murder, Center Stage a standing ovation."

Both books were published by Gray & Company, Publishers and have found an audience. But once theaters began their resurrection, Murder, Center Stage was turned into a play set in a community theater production of Sweeney Todd that made its theatrical debut in September, 2022 at the Chagrin Valley Little Theatre, in Chagrin Falls, OH.

"The play was perfect for the yearly fundraiser, which will benefit the theater's 93rd season," said CVLT board president Angie DeBernardo in an article in a local daily paper, The News-Herald. "Guests view the first act of the show and then descend onto downtown Chagrin Falls to search for clues and determine who they believe committed the murder before coming back for the reveal. Bob's story lends itself to a light-hearted murder mystery, and he has a writing style that aligns with other fundraising productions we've done," she adds. Audience members who accurately guessed the murderer received prizes and all ticket holders took home a complimentary copy of the Novella.

The script for Murder, Center Stage: The Play is available to all OCTA members seeking a fundraising event, which can be catered to their theater and community. For information, go to my Murder, Center Stage: The Play Facebook page. Here's hoping that, in 2023, there is no reason to turn the Misadventures of a Clandestine Critic series into a trilogy.



**WANT YOUR STORY IN THE  
SPOTLIGHT? REACH OUT TO  
ASROBERTS2003@GMAIL.COM**