

# ENCORE!

THE CIVIC THEATRE NEWSLETTER

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## Celebrating Bob Fowle

*After 39 years of magic at Civic Theatre, Costumer Designer Robert Fowle was awarded the Norma Brinks Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2018 Grand Awards.*

After receiving the award, Fowle reflected on how his career has come full-circle alongside Civic Theatre. Fowle's interest in theatre first began in high school, where he volunteered building sets, designing lights, and helping backstage.

"Originally, my high school didn't have a theatre program. One of my teachers was interested in beginning one, and she recruited me to help," shared Fowle. "We were just a group of students who wanted to do theatre, but we had no idea what we were doing. Civic Theatre's Technical

Director Larry D'Haem volunteered to come and teach us." Under the mentorship of D'Haem, the group began an official theatre program for the high school.

Hooked on theatre, Fowle began studying Scenic Design in college.

Students were expected to participate in and learn all areas of theatre. While assisting with *Tartuffe*, Fowle found his passion for Costume Design.

**"I STILL REMEMBER THE DIRECTOR WANTED THE ENTIRE SHOW TO LOOK LIKE A SEPIA PHOTOGRAPH. TO HELP CREATE THE EFFECT, WE TRANSFORMED ALL THE COSTUMES FROM WHITE TO BEAUTIFUL SHADES OF SEPIA – EVERYTHING WAS CREAM, TAN, BROWN, DARK BROWN," SAID FOWLE. "WATCHING IT COME TOGETHER, I THOUGHT 'NOW THAT'S COOL.'"**

Civic Theatre was Fowle's first job after college, and 39 years later his creations are still delighting audiences. "It's been amazing to watch the scale to which everything at Civic Theatre has grown. From our production quality, to our audiences, to our education programs, everything has expanded," said Fowle. "It's all for the better."

As for any crazy costume chaos, Fowle reports that nothing has ever gone too wrong on stage with the exception of the 1972 production of *Sly Fox*. One evening, he received a call that two of the actors' costumes had gone missing. Fowle raced to the theatre and quickly re-created a costume that would work for that evening's performance. If you're the sly fox who once stole an 1880s-three-piece suit and naval costume, please return them to their Civic Theatre home.



# Building Our Brightest Future

Since 1925, Civic Theatre has been an integral part of our community. Thanks to the Civic Endowment Fund, our spotlights will stay bright for generations to come.

As we approach our 94th season, we give thanks for the many individual donors, volunteers, and community partners who have helped in creating the magic of live theatre for over 90,000 individuals impacted by Civic Theatre each year.

"We are fortunate to live in a great community that values cultural experiences, especially in the arts. One of the finest of these community assets is Civic Theatre, which would not be what it is without the support of volunteers and donors," said Chad Dutcher, Partner at Norris Perné & French Investment Counsel (NPF). Since the 1930s, NPF has been a long-time partner of Civic Theatre.

**"WE RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO INVEST IN OUR RICH CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ALLOW FUTURE GENERATIONS TO SEE THE BENEFITS FOR MANY YEARS TO COME." – CHAD DUTCHER**

As investment advisors, NPF encourages individuals to develop long-term giving plans to keep community treasures, like Civic Theatre, thriving for future generations. "Having a long-term

giving plan not only seeks to optimize tax benefits that could increase the impact of your gifts, but it can also create a more sustained source of funds to support the future objectives of the organization," shared Dutcher.

When creating your long-term giving plan, some choices include:

- gifting stocks, bonds, or mutual funds;
- directing gifts in your will;
- making a Qualified Charitable Distribution via an IRA;
- donating via Donor Advised Funds;
- naming Civic Theatre as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy.

Directing these gifts to the Civic Endowment Fund creates an enduring personal legacy, while building growth and long-term income for Civic Theatre. Individuals should consult a tax-advisor to help determine any tax benefits from these gift types.

Thank you to Norris Perné & French Investment Counsel for sponsoring our annual On The Horizon event in June 2019, benefiting the Civic Endowment Fund. For more information on the event and supporting the long-term future of Civic Theatre, please contact Autumn Hubbard at [a.hubbard@grct.org](mailto:a.hubbard@grct.org).



## A Mystery is Afoot

*Looking for a winter activity? Join us for And Then There Were None, a frightfully-fun whodunit from best-selling Queen of Crime Agatha Christie.*

A personal favorite of Christie's, *And Then There Were None* is the best-selling crime novel of all time. In 2015, it was voted the 'World's Favorite Christie' in a global vote to celebrate Agatha Christie's 125th anniversary.

How well do you know Agatha Christie and her work? Find the answers in the *And Then There Were None* playbill as it takes the stage, January 11-27:

1. Originally premiering in 1943, the stage adaptation of *And Then There Were None* is not the only way in which the story has been shared. Name at least three other mediums that tell the tale.
2. Which of Christie's stories holds the distinction of the world's longest-running theatre production?
3. Since 1971, how many times has Civic Theatre produced *And Then There Were None*?
4. Which sport brought Christy on a round-the-world tour, visiting five different countries?
5. There is more than one ending to *And Then There Were None*; which one will Civic Theatre present?





*"Each season, we seek a mix of the latest releases and proven classics with the most universal themes to delight and inspire our audiences."*

BRUCE TINKER,  
EXECUTIVE & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## Season Selection, No Simple Task

*Have you ever wondered how Civic Theatre selects a season? This long and dedicated process begins by reading hundreds of scripts, and takes over ten months!*

When selecting a season, we look to create a combination of family-friendly favorites, theatre classics, and fresh-from-Broadway shows that will be received enthusiastically by our community. "We also look for pieces that will provide opportunities for a wide range of actors, from first-time volunteers to returning favorites, and individuals of all ages," shared Bruce Tinker, Executive and Artistic Director. Because of our professional-quality actors (who are all volunteers!), Civic Theatre is well-known and sometimes given special rights to bring West Michigan limited or new releases. In the past, these special performance rights have included regional or national premieres such as *All the Way*, *The Boatwright*, and *Sister Act*.

The most difficult part of finalizing a season is securing the rights to perform a piece. "As a community theatre, it is with rare exception that Civic Theatre is given rights to a title if it is being produced by a professional regional theatre, traveling, or currently on Broadway," shared Tinker. "There are even restrictions on when we're allowed to announce certain titles, based on when another area theatre may be producing them as well. This is why we had to wait to announce *Mamma Mia!* for our current season."

What new favorites will you find in our 2019-20 Season? Stay tuned for our February announcement! Whatever the title, you can trust each show will present the highest caliber acting, sets, and costumes that have earned us a spot as one of the oldest and largest community theatres in the U.S.

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## MLK Day Collaboration With Area Universities

*This year, Civic Theatre is proud to partner with local universities and arts organizations to celebrate Martin Luther King Day. Join us on January 21 at Fountain Street Church, 6-8pm.*

In honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Civic Theatre invites you to join us for the 2019 Inter-Collegiate MLK Celebration on January 21. This year's theme celebrates the role of youth activism in civil rights, and the inspiring lessons of Dr. King. Program partners include Opera Grand Rapids, Davenport University, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College and Warner Norcross + Judd.

Civic Theatre has coordinated a group of young actors to recite passages from Dr. King on the theme of youth activism. In addition to these monologues, there will be several vocal performances, reflections on the legacy of Dr. King, a keynote address by activist David Banner, and the presentation of the "Inherit the Dream" Scholarships.

We'd like to thank the following Civic Theatre volunteers who have served on the 2019 planning committee: Eddie L Stephens, Jr., Marissa Baty, Mary Lou Smith, Melita Travis Johnson, Michael Travis, and Sonja Forte. This event is free to the public, and we hope you will join us in celebrating the legacy of Dr. King.



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