Ojai Art Center

Theater Branch

06 October 2026 / 7:00 PM / Raymund Room

Attendees

- Anna Kotula - Chair
- Jill Dolan - Vice Chair
- Herb Hemming - Treasurer
- Christina Fabbro - Secretary
- Steve Grumette, evan austin - Members at Large
- Tracey Williams Sutton (phone) - Artistic Director
- Laura Light - Technical Director
- Other Attendees: Gai, Jennifer Moran, Robin, Laura Ring, James Baker, Andrew, Janet, David, Larry

Agenda

Call to Order / Welcome

Approval of 01 September, 2026 Meeting Notes

Moved by James Baker

Second by Janet

- Steve Grumette noted that the section on theater sound improvements was 100% accurate.

1. Financial Report

- **Current balance:** $28,223.54
- **September income:** $160.00
- **September expenses:** $3,549.30
- **September net operating result:** A deficit of $3,389.30.

The low September income was attributed to the gap between productions, as ticket sales for *Our Town* had not yet begun at the time covered by the report.

The group acknowledged that the organization maintained a financial cushion, while recognizing that funds belong to the Art Center as a whole.

Clarification Regarding *Company*-A correction was made to the previous month's financial discussion concerning the production of *Company*. The earlier statement that the production had lost approximately 2,000-3,000 was incorrect.

The reported loss was approximately $387.77.

The group expressed relief at the corrected figure and acknowledged the production's expenses, including musician and contractual costs.

2. Technical Director / Technical Operations Report

Lobby Curtains and Light Control

- The group discussed the failure of the curtains installed near the lobby entrance to the theater.
- The curtains had been attached using adhesive and standard plastic drywall anchors. The hardware pulled away from the wall, and the installation did not provide adequate support.

Purpose of the curtains: To create a light-blocking area at the theater entrance so that audience members can enter and exit without allowing distracting lobby light into the performance space.

- Members noted that light entering through the doors can distract both performers and audience members, particularly during scenes in which the theater is otherwise dark.

Several possible solutions were discussed, including:

- Installing stronger and more appropriate mounting hardware.
- Providing additional structural support along the wall.
- Consulting a qualified professional about a secure installation.
- Evaluating the arrangement to ensure it does not create a trip hazard or interfere with the movement of the curtains.

The group agreed that the issue should be addressed properly rather than repeating an installation that may fail again.

Follow-up: The relevant facilities and theater personnel will confer on an improved installation and determine the appropriate professional assistance and hardware.

Stage and Side Exit Curtains

- The group discussed the black curtains used onstage and their temporary storage and installation arrangements.
- Concerns were raised about the fragility of the curtains and the importance of protecting them from damage.
- The curtains are being stored in protective bags while remaining attached to their rail system. The group discussed taking them down after the productions requiring them are completed.
- The curtains will be made available for the upcoming *Best Christmas Pageant Ever* production as needed.
- The group also discussed the work undertaken by Mike and Gamyn Blacker to improve the curtains near the stage exit doors.

Temporary Exterior Light-Blocking Structures

- Temporary exterior structures used to control light were reviewed.
- The structures had been installed for a production and were intended to be removable.
- The production team requested that the structures remain in place for *Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, as they had been working effectively.

Outcome: Permission was given to leave the structures in place for that production. Their longer-term status can be considered afterward.

Stage Equipment and Safety

- The group discussed an exterior door near the green room that had been left open overnight. Police subsequently came to the premises.
- A replacement door is being arranged.
- The existing doorway presents a safety concern because of the significant step down outside. Signage warns users not to open the door, but the group recognized the importance of ensuring that the door remains secure.

Follow-up: Complete the replacement of the door and maintain appropriate safety precautions.

Speaker Installation

- The group received an update on plans to relocate and raise the theater speakers.
- Steve and Larry are working on a proposed solution. The installation will require a period when the theater is not occupied by rehearsals or other activities.

Follow-up: Coordinate a suitable work period and continue planning the installation.

3. Production Updates

Our Town

The group received an update on the current production of *Our Town*.

The report was positive across several areas:

- Box office: Ticket sales and audience attendance were being monitored.
- Artistic quality: Audience feedback was favorable.
- Production operations: The production was running well from a logistical and technical standpoint.
- Cast and crew: The team appeared to be working well together and enjoying the experience.

The production was viewed as an example of the Art Center's goal of providing community theater opportunities while developing strong production teams.

Marketing and Publicity

- The group discussed the increased social media activity surrounding *Our Town*.
- The production team has been working to create strong promotional photographs, including photographs featuring costumes, and to distribute content through social media.
- Catalina has been assisting with the production's social media presence, while Christina has access to the Art Center's theater social media accounts and can share or collaborate on production posts.
- The group discussed the value of having both a dedicated production presence and the broader Art Center's social media channels support each show.
- Members expressed interest in determining whether a separate social media profile for a production increases engagement and ticket sales.
- The group also discussed the importance of planning for social media support in each production's budget rather than treating it as an informal or last-minute responsibility.

Production Evaluation

- The group would like to review the production after it closes to identify practices that worked well and those that could be improved.
- This review should help establish repeatable practices for future productions.

Follow-up: The *Our Town* team will provide a more detailed report at the next meeting, including lessons learned and available marketing and social media results.

Upcoming Production: *Best Christmas Pageant Ever*

The production team reported that rehearsals were underway.

- The cast size was still being finalized, with approximately 36-38 performers anticipated.
- The children were reported to be enthusiastic and willing to take on additional responsibilities.
- The adult cast was also described positively.
- The production team was working on staging and set design.

The group discussed the need for reusable stairs and confirmed that the existing modular stairs could be used, provided they were handled carefully and returned to their designated storage location.

Maintaining organized storage was emphasized so the stairs would remain available for future productions.

The team also discussed the need for appropriate temporary curtains and light-blocking arrangements.

Upcoming Production: *The Miracle Worker*

- The group discussed costumes and props associated with *The Miracle Worker*, including items currently being used or supplied through other individuals and organizations.
- Some costumes are the property of outside providers and must be returned after the production. Other pieces were constructed specifically for the Art Center's production and belong to the Art Center.
- The discussion emphasized the need to distinguish between borrowed costumes and items owned by the organization.
- Members expressed interest in identifying suitable costumes and props that could be retained or acquired for future productions.
- *The Miracle Worker budget* will be brought to a future meeting.

Follow-up:

- Review production photographs to identify useful costumes.
- Coordinate with the appropriate costume providers regarding any potential donations or purchases.
- Ensure borrowed costumes are returned according to the agreed schedule.
- Continue identifying potential prop donations.

Auditions

- Auditions for *The Miracle Worker* were announced for the first week of December.
- Further audition information was expected to be circulated.

4. Artistic Director Update and Upcoming Season Update

A Christmas Carol

Peter Crane has expressed interest in returning to direct *A Christmas Carol*. He previously directed an earlier version of the production and is expected to replace the Artistic Director as director for this production.

Mary Crane is interested in handling costumes and may need additional assistance.

Season Design and Promotional Materials

The Artistic Director and Hayley have been discussing design concepts for the upcoming season.

The group discussed the importance of maintaining a consistent visual identity across the season's promotional materials, including:

- Social media graphics.
- The Art Center website.
- Electronic newsletters.
- Printed brochures and lobby displays.
- Season announcements and individual show promotions.

The design work is ongoing, with further decisions to be made regarding the visual concept, colors, and overall presentation.

The group recognized that creating effective promotional materials requires advance planning and coordination.

Season Preview Planning

The group discussed arrangements for the upcoming season preview and the goal of reducing the workload on the Artistic Director.

Andrew volunteered to take responsibility for coordinating the event.

The discussion clarified that several roles may be involved, including:

- Coordinating with directors and producers.
- Organizing the overall program.
- Managing the sequence of performances and presentations.
- Coordinating technical requirements and stage transitions.

The distinction between coordinating or directing the event and serving as its MC was discussed at length.

Andrew emphasized the importance of understanding the scope of the responsibility before committing to a particular role.

Tracey explained that the event coordinator and the MC do not necessarily need to be the same person.

Tom Hall was mentioned as a possible participant in the presentation.

Outcome: Andrew will take responsibility for coordinating the season preview and developing the event plan. The specific format, MC arrangements, and division of responsibilities remain to be clarified.

Tracey will continue to provide input and coordinate with directors as appropriate, without carrying the entire organizational workload.

Follow-up: Andrew and Tracey will communicate directly to clarify expectations, responsibilities, and the information needed from each production team.

5. Shared Calendar and Scheduling

- The group reviewed the shared Art Center calendar.
- The calendar currently includes information through the end of *The Miracle Worker*, with additional dates and details for subsequent productions still to be entered.
- Rental activities and other events are also being added.

Calendar Access

- At the time of the meeting, access was primarily available to members of the Executive Committee.

- The group discussed expanding access so that directors, stage managers, and other appropriate production personnel can view the calendar and coordinate their schedules.
- The person maintaining the calendar can provide access when supplied with the relevant email addresses.

Scheduling Gaps

- Members identified a problem with information not consistently appearing across the shared calendar and the theater's internal rehearsal schedules.
- In particular, some technical rehearsals, weekend work periods, and loading activities were missing from the shared calendar.
- The group emphasized that the calendar must reflect all relevant production activities, not just regular rehearsals.

Follow-up:

- Continue entering production dates, technical rehearsals, loading periods, and other relevant activities.
- Provide calendar access to appropriate directors and stage managers.
- Help ensure that the staff member responsible for coordinating facility use can access and reference the schedule.
- Consider providing printed calendar copies as a short-term solution.

6. Suzy Cadham Production Update

- The event was reported to have sold out.
- The financial outcome was considered positive.
- The discussion included the possibility of presenting the event again.
- The group acknowledged the substantial effort made by the performer and production team.

The event was recognized as a successful undertaking.

7. Play Reading: *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)*

- Jill provided an update on the upcoming play reading scheduled for October 30.
- David Henderson has prepared an adaptation of *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)*, the 1920s play associated with the introduction of the word "robot."
- The adaptation is intended to shorten the original play to approximately one hour.
- David will also direct the production. Casting was reported to be complete or substantially complete.

Venue and Technical Requirements

The event is planned for the patio and will involve technical requirements beyond those of a conventional indoor reading.

The group discussed:

- Obtaining suitable speakers and microphones.
- Arranging lighting so performers can read their scripts outdoors.
- Coordinating additional technical equipment.
- Creating an engaging atmosphere appropriate to the play's futuristic themes.

The possibility of encouraging audience members to attend in costume or dressed as robots was also discussed.

Marketing and Donations

- Two performances were planned, one earlier and one later in the evening.
- The original suggested donation was $5. A suggestion was made to consider a $10 suggested donation, while allowing audience members to contribute what they could.
- The event had missed the deadline for inclusion in the Art Center's regular calendar. Terry had offered to arrange an electronic announcement.

Follow-up:

- Complete arrangements for microphones, speakers, and lighting.
- Coordinate the electronic announcement and other available publicity.
- Finalize event logistics and suggested-donation messaging.

8. General Business

- **Recognition of *Our Town* Director**-David Henderson congratulated evan austin on his first-time directing experience with *Our Town*.
- The production was praised for its relaxed rehearsal environment, positive team atmosphere, and inclusion of first-time cast members.
- The group acknowledged the value of encouraging new participants and creating an environment in which performers can contribute creatively while remaining focused on the production.

Competition and Audience Attendance

- Members discussed the increasing competition for local audiences, including performances and programs offered by other organizations.
- The group acknowledged that competition may affect attendance and emphasized the importance of considering audience demand when planning productions and promotional strategies.
- Members also noted that full houses alone do not necessarily establish which productions are most successful overall.
- The discussion reinforced the importance of evaluating both artistic and financial outcomes.

Publicity and Marketing Support

The group discussed whether the Art Center should consider hiring and paying a dedicated publicity professional.

Potential responsibilities could include:

- Social media management.
- Coordinating promotional campaigns.
- Supporting publicity for individual productions.
- Ensuring that marketing efforts are consistent and measurable.

Members recognized that publicity work requires time, planning, and clear expectations.

The discussion raised the need to define responsibilities and establish measurable outcomes if a paid position is pursued.

Ticket Discounts and Promotional Pricing

Members discussed the inconsistent use of two-for-one ticket offers and other discounts.

Some participants felt that discounts had limited impact when introduced only a few days before a performance. Others emphasized that planned discounts can help attract audiences.

The group discussed:

- Whether to establish a consistent discounted performance.
- The possibility of offering discounts on the first Saturday evening.
- The potential for earlier performance times, such as a 4:00 p.m. show, to help distribute attendance more evenly across a weekend.
- The need to plan promotional pricing in advance rather than using discounts as a last-minute measure.

The group noted that other theaters have experimented with alternative performance times and that the results may be worth examining.

Marketing Analytics and Audience Research

The group discussed the need to better understand how audiences discover Art Center productions.

Questions included:

- Are audience members local residents or visitors from other communities?
- Do people attend because they know someone involved in a production?
- Which promotional channels are most effective?
- How much audience traffic comes from social media, printed posters, direct website visits, or other sources?

Members recognized that gathering this information could improve marketing decisions and help the organization use its resources more effectively.

Potential methods included:

- Audience surveys.
- Short questionnaires at performances.

- A simple question during online ticket purchasing asking how the customer heard about the production.
- Tracking QR-code scans and promotional links.
- Reviewing available ticketing and social media data.

The group discussed the challenges of collecting information without creating additional work for volunteers.

It was noted that a survey form had already been created and that audience surveys had previously produced useful information.

The *Our Town* production is using the same link for social media promotion and its poster QR code. This will provide some combined data, although it will not distinguish between those two sources.

Follow-up: Continue exploring practical methods for gathering audience information and evaluating promotional effectiveness. No final data-collection procedure was established.

9. The meeting adjourned.