

Ojai Art Center

Theater Branch

01 September 2026 / 7:00 PM / Raymund Room

ATTENDEES

- Anna Kotula - Chair
- Jill Dolan - Vice Chair
- Herb Hemming - Treasurer
- Christina Fabbro - Secretary
- Steve Grumette - Members at Large
- Tracey Williams Sutton - Artistic Director
- Laura Light - Technical Director
- Other Attendees: Robin, Gai, Marisa, Janet, Suzy, Laura Ring, Lenny

AGENDA

Call to Order / Welcome

Approval of 04 August, 2026 Meeting Notes

Moved by Gai (pending name spelling correction)

Second by Jill

1. Financial Report

- Current balance was reported at approximately **\$29,000**.
- August income was approximately **\$3,103**.
- August expenses were approximately **\$7,031**, resulting in a reported negative ordinary income of **\$3938.24**, however approximately **\$2,500** was spent on rights for *The Little Shop of Horrors*.
- The theater's electric bill is now running at more than **\$500 per month**.
- Graphic design expenses were reported at approximately **\$635 per month**.
- Limited ticket income was noted because there had not been significant programming during the period.
- The previous production of *Company* was discussed as having finished approximately 2,000-**3,000 in the hole**, which was mainly due to Andy Street's fee of **\$10,000**.

The group acknowledged that production costs, utilities, and other ongoing expenses continue to affect the theater's operating position.

2. Technical Director / Technical Operations Report

The group discussed the technical department and recognized the substantial coordination required to support productions, rentals, film activities, rehearsals, and other theater needs.

Technical Operations

- Laura was recognized for her extensive knowledge of the theater and technical booth, having worked on most productions over the past several years.
- The technical team continues to coordinate:
 - Lighting
 - Sound
 - Film activities
 - Theater rentals
 - Rehearsals
 - Production needs
 - Access to technical equipment and spaces
- New gels were purchased to create an **old-time/vintage effect** for *Our Town*.
- The new gels were expected to be tested during the week's rehearsals.

The group emphasized that technical coordination is a significant part of successfully supporting the theater's many simultaneous activities.

3. Request From Living Theater

The group discussed a request from **Living Theater Academy** for assistance with upcoming productions.

Request

Living Theater requested:

- Use of available theater flats for *Dear Evan Hansen*.
- Assistance identifying someone who could help with set construction.
- Potential use of the theater for a one-woman show in November.

The exact number and dimensions of flats needed were not yet known because the requesting group had not finalized its set design.

Decision

A motion was made to support fellow theater organizations by allowing Living Theater to use available flats, provided that:

1. The organization picks up the flats.
2. The flats are returned.
3. The flats are returned in the same condition in which they were borrowed.

The motion was approved.

Follow-Up

- Laura/technical staff will coordinate with the appropriate theater personnel to determine what flats are available.

- Living Theater will provide additional information regarding its set design and requirements.
- Equipment should not leave the theater without appropriate staff oversight.

The discussion also reinforced the importance of maintaining a formal check-out/check-in procedure for theater property.

4. Equipment Check-Out Procedure

The group discussed the need for a reliable system to track equipment, props, costumes, and other theater property that leaves the facility.

Current System

- A check-out form reportedly exists and is kept in the top drawer/front cabinet in the Green Room.
- The form applies to costumes, props, and other items.
- Laura or another designated theater representative should oversee items leaving the facility.

Discussion

The group noted previous instances in which borrowed items were not returned.

Action Item: Confirm and improve the existing check-out/check-in procedure so that all borrowed property is documented and monitored.

5. Current Production / *Our Town*

The group received an update on *Our Town*.

Production Status

- The production team has been working on the show for several months.
- The set was cleared following the youth production, allowing the production team to move into the theater.
- Most performers were in costume.
- Sound cues were being run.
- The cast and production team were described as enthusiastic and collaborative.
- Actors were reportedly showing appreciation for one another's work, including applauding fellow performers.
- Herb asked about the structures off the side entrances of the building; they were put up as temporary structures to prevent light from coming into the theater for entrances and exits for the actors from the shows.

Publicity

- Press releases and advertising were reported to be in place.
- Volunteers were requested to assist with parking-lot duties during performances.
- Jill arranged an event with the museum to promote *Our Town* with a discussion about the historical connection between Thornton Wilder and Ojai. The event

is scheduled for September 13th at 4:30pm. The discussion/panel will be led by Mark Lewis, a local historian.

6. Theater Sound Improvements

The group discussed improvements to the theater's acoustics and sound system.

Acoustic Panels

- Acoustic panels are being installed in the theater.
- The project is being funded by the Arts Center.
- Total cost, including installation, was reported at approximately **\$3,000**.
- Installation was expected to begin on Saturday.
- A professional installation crew will perform the work.
- If the installation cannot be completed in one day, additional time will be scheduled.

Sound System

Paul Massey assisted with the theater's sound system and identified a phase issue with the speakers.

The issue was corrected, and the equalization was adjusted.

A new equalizer was purchased, allowing separate settings for:

- Movies
- Theater

Once the acoustic panels are installed, the room will be re-equalized.

7. Upcoming Season

The Artistic Director previously announced the upcoming season, and the group expressed enthusiasm about the new season.

The season had received the necessary approval.

Season Brochure

Discussion began regarding the design and theme for the upcoming season brochure.

Ideas included:

- Developing a cohesive theme.
- Updating the visual design.
- Making the brochure more visually engaging.
- Having artwork represent each production rather than necessarily using the final production artwork.

The season includes **six productions**.

Marketing Discussion

There was discussion about whether a traditional brochure remains the most effective marketing tool.

Members suggested:

- Expanding the mailing list beyond existing subscribers.
- Considering direct-mail outreach.

- Reaching people throughout the broader community rather than only current theater supporters.

No final decision was made regarding a replacement for the traditional brochure.

8. Season Preview

The group discussed the date and format for the upcoming season preview.

Decision

The preferred preview date was:

Sunday, January 10 at 7:00 p.m.

The preview is expected to:

- Run approximately one hour.
- Include approximately two- to three-minute presentations for each production.
- Give directors artistic freedom regarding how they present their shows.

Preview Format

The group discussed whether the existing format should be changed.

Suggestions included:

- Creating a more organized structure.
- Making presentations feel more rehearsed and professional.
- Allowing directors to explain why they selected their productions.
- Including scenes, songs, interviews, or other creative material.

The group agreed that presentations should retain variety while avoiding an appearance of being completely unrehearsed.

Staffing

It was recognized that coordinating the preview requires substantial work.

Tracy has historically carried much of the responsibility, and the group agreed that additional assistance should be provided if she continues in that role.

Potential assistance may include:

- Production coordination
- Stage management
- Technical coordination
- Communication with directors

9. Best Christmas Pageant Ever

The group reviewed the financial information and proposed budget for *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

Proposed Ticket Pricing

Discussion included:

- General admission: **\$25**
- Season-ticket pricing/credit
- Children 12 and under: **\$10**
- Nine performances were anticipated.

Other Income

Potential income included:

- Ticket sales
- Season-ticket allocation
- Donations
- Lumber-yard donation
- Parking revenue allocation

The group clarified that:

- Half of parking revenue goes toward the theater branch operating account.
- The other half supports the Arts Center.
- Concession revenue goes to the theater branch operating account.

Production Expenses

Expenses discussed included:

- Royalties
- Music/rehearsal tracks
- Costumes
- Program/layout
- Poster/graphic design
- Staff honoraria

The production was being updated to a modern-day setting, allowing many performers to use their own clothing and simplifying costume expenses.

Approval—The proposed budget was **approved**.

Production Update

The group discussed production preparations.

Music

- Rehearsal tracks and instrumental/vocal tracks had been obtained.
- Significant effort had been made to secure appropriate music resources.

Design

- The production will use a modern-day setting.
- Costumes should therefore be relatively simple.

Poster

The group discussed potential graphic-design assistance for the production poster.

Auditions

Auditions for an upcoming production were discussed.

The dates listed in the meeting materials were:

September 26, 28, and 29

The dates were being approved as part of the production planning process.

10. Marketing and Publicity

The marketing and publicity team reported positive progress.

Current Activities

- Press releases were being prepared.

- Advertising was underway.
- Additional creative promotional ideas were being developed.
- Cast members were actively promoting the production through social media.
- Early ticket sales were reported.

The group credited the cast's participation and enthusiasm with helping create strong promotional momentum.

11. Social Media

Christina was recognized for taking responsibility for the theater's social-media access and coordination.

The group noted:

- Increased participation in social-media promotion.
- Greater involvement from productions and cast members.
- More consistent promotional activity.

The group expressed appreciation for the increased social-media engagement.

12. Suzy Cadham Production

The group welcomed **Suzy Cadham**, who was performing a production at the theater.

Performance

Date: September 13

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Suzy discussed her experience working with the community theater and expressed appreciation for the work taking place behind the scenes.

Ticket Sales / Promotion

Approximately **50 tickets** were reported as having been sold at the time of the meeting.

The production was being promoted through:

- Email
- Personal networks
- Community organizations
- Social media
- The American Legion's outreach
- Local publicity

Susie emphasized the goal of selling out the performance.

Fundraising

The performance was discussed as a fundraiser benefiting both the Arts Center and veterans' organizations.

The group discussed the importance of the veteran-support component of the event.

Technical Requirements

The production includes substantial multimedia content, including:

- Video
- Still images

- Music
- Approximately **76 cues**

Laura was coordinating technical requirements.

Additional technical assistance may be needed, including spotlight operations.

13. Play Reading Series

The group discussed the next play-reading event.

Proposed Date October 30

Proposed Times

- Approximately **6:30 p.m.**
- Approximately **9:00 p.m.**

The specific plays/readings had not yet been selected.

The event will need to be coordinated with Terry and placed on the appropriate calendar.

14. Theater Scheduling / Communication Issues

Members expressed concern about:

- Lack of communication regarding theater use.
- Uncertainty about who is responsible for maintaining the theater schedule.
- Rehearsal schedules are not always being communicated.
- The possibility of productions having to locate alternate rehearsal space.

Existing Scheduling Policy

The group discussed the practice of directors reserving Sunday evening time when needed, particularly the **6:00-9:00 p.m.** period.

The group agreed that clearer communication is needed to prevent conflicts.

Action Items

- Clarify scheduling responsibilities with Terry.
- Confirm how rehearsal schedules are communicated.
- Ensure production schedules are reflected on the internal Google Calendar.
- Continue using the calendar to identify conflicts before they occur.

The group noted that the theater hosts many overlapping activities and that a clear, shared scheduling system is essential.

Google Theater Calendar- oactscheduling@gmail.com

The group discussed a new Google Calendar designed to improve coordination of theater activities.

Purpose

The calendar is intended to show:

- Rehearsals
- Technical work
- Film activities
- Theater rentals

- Other activities affecting use of the theater

The calendar is primarily intended as an **internal scheduling tool** to prevent conflicts.

Access

- Members of the Executive Committee have access.
- Directors and others working on productions can be given access.
- A link to the calendar will be distributed to members who need it.

Important Distinction

The Google Calendar does **not** replace the existing process for booking or renting the theater through the appropriate Arts Center contact.

Action Item

Distribute/re-send the Google Calendar link and ensure directors and production personnel who need access can view it.

15. Special Event

Thursday, October 8 at 7:00 p.m.

Michael Estwanik had rented the theater for an **“I Will Always Love You”** tribute to **Dolly Parton**.

16. General Business

The meeting also included recognition of the extensive contributions made by volunteers, production personnel, technical staff, and community members.

Members expressed appreciation for:

- Volunteer support
- Parent participation in youth productions
- Technical assistance
- Artistic contributions
- Community partnerships
- Continued support of the theater and Arts Center
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17. Birthday Recognition

The group recognized **Robin, and Herb** for a September birthday and sang “Happy Birthday.”

18. Closing

The meeting concluded with appreciation for the many individuals contributing to the theater and Arts Center.

Members acknowledged that the organization is managing a large number of productions, events, rentals, rehearsals, and community activities and emphasized the importance of communication, coordination, and shared responsibility.

The meeting adjourned.