

Fall Excitement as Writers Publish and Produce

The Caldarian Conflict **Book Launch** **by Mike Kalmbach**

By Joan Sween

Mike Kalmbach is launching his debut novel, *The Caldarian Conflict*, with a bang. Or perhaps we should say with an "Arr!" His novel being about pirates, and September 19, being both his launch date and Talk Like A Pirate Day, his launch party will see him and his family decked out as pirates. He's offering a free eye patch to everyone who attends the Plummer House event, and of course, autographed copies of his book will be on sale.

Describing his novel, Mike says, "In a word, pirates. In a few more words, this book follows a monk named Mendell who gets caught between a corrupt government and angry pirates. While counseling a pirate prisoner, Mendell enters a crisis of faith as he wonders whether that pirate's execution is justified. This drives him to uncover the corruption and try to save the day.

"While this book is set in a fantasy world loosely based on 17th century Europe, the problems they encounter (suicide bombers, assassins, homelessness, and even a housing crisis) are similar to those happening in our world today. When good men become too focused on a single goal, the choices they make often seem evil to the outside observer.

"I've always been a fan of books that stretch the imagination. Fantasy and science fiction are designed for exactly that purpose. Plus, fantasy allows you to explore boundaries of fictional societies that may not closely resemble our own."

Mike is a software engineer at IBM in Rochester who recently earned his Master's degree in Software Engineering at the University of Minnesota. He jo-

kingly adds, "All opinions expressed here and in my stories are my own and not those of my employer."

When the day is over, however, Mike often has to land running. He is the facilitator of the Rochester Library Writers Group, does freelance editing, guides several small focused writing groups, assists in writers festival planning, hosts a monthly networking forum for writers, and teaches robotics to students.



Mike Kalmbach

With all his after-work activities, Mike needed to set writing goals to keep the novel moving forward. "I set aside a minimum daily word count, 500 words, [but] I'm free to decide how that gets done--though it's often after my wife and son go to sleep. I've invested the time to make writing part of my routine. However, the single most important decision was knowing the ending before I started. That allowed me to keep making progress toward a tangible goal, and helped keep the 'staring at the monitor' moments to a minimum."

(Continued on page 2)

The Caldarian Conflict (continued from page 1)

Mike estimates *The Caldarian Conflict* took about 15 months from start to finish--nine months to produce a rough draft, six months soliciting critiques and revising.

He has crafted his launch as carefully as he crafted his novel, calling it a multi-pronged approach with three key areas--social media, traditional media, and in-person events. His plan is as follows:

Social media:

- Leveraging several book review sites, including a new one called BookRooster.com that helps connect with readers who enjoy your genre.
- Creating a Facebook group for fans and friends to keep up on the latest news for the book.
- Creating a trailer to run on YouTube.
- Planning a Twitter campaign to get the word out without becoming yet another talking billboard.

Traditional media:

- Contacting local newspapers, newsletters and TV stations for interviews and to spread the word locally.

In-person events:

- Planning a launch party
- Appearing at area book signing events
- Presenting at area authors conferences

So, this novel's finished, what's next for the author?

"I do have other novels planned for Caldaria, but my next focus is finishing another fantasy novel with the working title *Into the Land of Iowah*. It's about a wizard who is banished to the most heinous land his enemy can think of--a corn field in the middle of present-day Iowa. It's intended to be a humorous novel, and I expect it to release sometime early next year. There are several other plans in the drawer, but I'm trying to focus on finishing one task at a time. Since I have a day job, focus is key."

When asked for the most helpful advice he could give to others working on a first novel, Mike said, "Know how your story will end before you write more than a few pages. Otherwise you're likely to create more headaches when you sit down to edit in six months or a year from now."

[Details on Mike's launch party can be found in the "Classes & Events" section of this newsletter.]

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How to Build A Platform from Scratch

[The following is reprinted from Chuck Sambuchino's blog, *Feedblitz*, posted on Thursday, July 28, 2011. This guest post is written by S. Jane Gari and Heidi R. Willis, ladies who are presently pitching a couple books, hoping for an agent.]

Two friends with a book idea attended a "How to Get Published" workshop three years ago. After 30 minutes, one leaned over and whispered, "What the hell is a platform?"

"I dunno. Maybe a portable stage for book signings?"

"He said we have to build it, and I don't get along with power tools."

This was us. If we ever wanted our project to have a shot in the field of dreams that is today's publishing industry, we'd have to navigate new waters. Platform: "If you build it, they will come."

[Editor's note: The old definition of an author "platform" was the writer's public visibility and reputation, which the publisher could use to promote and sell the book. Things have changed, however. It's still about visibility, but the new understanding of author platform requires developing an unobstructed back and forth between authors and their readers, with the authors -- not the publishers -- controlling the flow. Now it's the author, not a publisher, who inspires readers to buy the book. The new author platform allows not only well-established authors, but unknown, first-time beginners, to reach readers directly.]

But how do you create a following and public visibility without even having a book out yet? It's counterintuitive, but agents and editors are more eager to take on writers who have proven their self-promoting hustle pre-contract. After shifting our perspective, we realized it wasn't just about the book. It was about us and our writing in general. Doing our homework meant figuring out what kinds of people would be interested in what we had to offer.

(Continued on page 3)

How To Build.... (continued from page 2)

Define Your Target Audience

Define your target audience and design every platform outlet with them in mind. We defined our audience in terms of what other books they would buy, what websites they would visit, what television shows they would watch. Then we made sure that we appealed to them. The first pieces of the platform puzzle were the website and blog. The colors, the layout, the font, our blog post topics, everything revolved around the promise we were making to readers.

What's In It For Our Readers?

Building the website forced us to brand ourselves and constantly answer the question: What's in it for our readers? Our logo, our slogans, our blog topics, a forum where readers could share their own stories with us, these all evolved from thinking like marketers. Anyone in advertising will tell you, never underestimate the power of free stuff. We used our website to launch contests that awarded readers with free copies of our promotional mini-book and offered a free story to anyone who signed up for our mailing list. Our website enjoyed more traffic, we built a mailing list and people who participated in the contest became contributors on our forum.

Social Media

The website was just the tip of the Internet iceberg. Social media was the next frontier. We set up YouTube, Facebook, Tumblr, Myspace and Twitter pages but then said, "Now what?" about a hundred times. Find two or three social media networks that give you the "warm fuzzies" and stick with them. YouTube was great for posting videos of our stand-up comedy based on material for our book, and we'll use it for book trailers in the future. For everyday contact with readers however, we use Facebook and Twitter. Getting people to become "fans" of your Facebook page can start with your friends and family, but having at least one other social network to link to is the best bet. Twitter worked well for us because it facilitates conversation comprised of quick-quips, and this format successfully connected us to other humor writers and readers.

Twitter was another place we could test drive our brand; it became a built-in focus group to garner ideas for new blog posts and to discuss the writing process with other bloggers and pick the brains of

published authors. Hashtags (#) are an incredible tool for generating and participating in ongoing conversations. A few weeks ago, we attended the Pennwriters Conference in Pittsburgh; at the end of all conference-related Tweets we simply typed "#pennwriters." Everyone else using the same hashtag could view and respond to what we wrote and vice versa. You can do this for any topic. Hashtags keep us balanced. We are interested in what other people are saying about writing, humor and whatever is trending on a given day.

Twenty minutes a day. That's all you need to ensure you don't fall victim to time-suck-syndrome. It's amazing what you can do in that twenty minutes -- post an upcoming conference you're attending, plug a free reading you're giving at a local bookstore, write about how much you love Tina Fey's new book, share a link to a great Writer's Digest blog post you just read, respond to other people's posts and create a real conversation.

That last part is key. In the digital era it's easy to forget that technology is not an end, but a means. Remember that the goal is to establish a connection with people who will eventually want to buy your book.

So start building that platform. You won't need power tools, just you and your words.

Write It Right

Don't trust online dictionaries, if you're reading your work aloud, remember, "flaccid" is pronounced "FLAK-sid," and "grimace" is pronounced "gr-MACE."

A Recommendation

Kate Halverson, a writer from Lake City, sent us this information:

"I just met Kate St. Vincent Vogl this weekend at a conference. She was an outstanding speaker, and after ten minutes alone with her over lunch, I decided I will use her as a professional editor when the time is right. Just thought I'd pass this info on as we've discussed these services in the past. She has a great accessible web site." www.katevogl.com

----Opportunities----

Mystery Writers of America is sponsoring a contest for best novel, best first novel, best paperback original, best fact crime, best critical biography, best short story, best juvenile work, best young adult work, best play and best TV episode. Entries must be previously published or produced. No entry fee. Deadline November 30, 2011. Margery Flax, Administrative Director, 1140 Broadway, New York, NY 10001, 212-888-8171. Submission guidelines for all types at: www.mysterywriters.org/?q=Edgars-Submissions.

2011 Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prizes

Prizes ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000 will be awarded for the finest lyric poems celebrating the human spirit. The contest is open to all writers, published or unpublished, who will be under the age of 40 on Nov. 6, 2011. Deadline: Oct. 11. More info: www.DorothyPrizes.org

The Green Blade, a literary arts publication by the Rural America Writers' Center in Plainview, is published spring, summer, fall and winter. Prose not exceeding 1,600 words and poems are encouraged from writers living in Southeastern Minnesota and who are affiliated in some way with the RAWC, either through membership, attendance at Open Mic events, or participation in events sponsored by the Center. For information, contact Kevin Rafferty. raffam@hbc.com.

---Events & Classes---

Forensics For Crime Writers

Tom Adair, a retired, internationally recognized, forensic scientist/CSI in Colorado, explains the basics of forensics for crime writers on his blog. More info: <http://forensics4fiction.wordpress.com/>

How To Give A Successful Poetry Reading

Craig Santos Perez gives advice on how to give a successful poetry reading. Check out his suggestions on http://www.pw.org/content/craig_santos_perez_on_bearing_the_gift_of_poetry_and_spam

Book Launch Party "The Caldarian Conflict"

Monday, Sept 19, 4-9 pm

The Plummer House

1091 Plummer Lane SW, Rochester

"The Caldarian Conflict" is Elgin author Mike Kalmbach's debut novel, an epic fantasy about piracy and where the boundaries lie between good and evil. Author-signed copies will be on sale. September 19, is also Talk Like a Pirate Day, so Mike and his family (including baby Alexander) will be in pirate garb. Costumes are optional, but encouraged. All attendees will receive a complimentary eye patch. Arr!

This is a free event, but please RSVP to
mikekalmbach@gmail.com

Authors and Artists Showcase

Saturday, September 24, 10-3 pm

At Rochester Family "Y", 709 1st Ave SW

Book signing and sales by local authors:

Jen Brewer, Helen Chen, Elsie Dunn, Tom Harper, David Fingerman, Mike Kalmbach, Pam Miller, Kit Rohrbach, Ann Schultz, Joan Sween, and the Divine Rhubarb Committee.

Paint, pottery, stitchery & photography

For sale & show

Brenda Kline, Leisa Luis-Grill, Mary Lou Devlin, Loretta Verbout, Andrew Neville, Deb Zipse

Free performances of humorous essay

"What I Learned From My Kids"

By Debi Neville 11:30 & 1:00

Free Seminar "Over the Transom"

Editors Ellie Miller Starks (*Rochester Women Magazine*) and Jim Tarbox (*The History Channel Magazine*) discuss how they deal with unsolicited manuscripts, networking, and a variety of other concerns to writers. Sponsored by Minnesota Magazine & Publishers Association. 10:30-Noon.

Free Seminar: "Through the Camera's Eye"

Presented by Andrew Neville, photography instructor and art photographer for over 30 years. The creative side of photography, including framing, focus, light, and choice of subject. 1:30-2:30

--Events & Classes Continued--

The All-Original Poetry Slam

Friday, Sept 30, 8pm, Decorah, IA

Presented by ArtHaus at the Elks Lodge, 402 W. Main St. The event will start with past winner Emily Scali as featured artist, followed by your poetry in the non-competitive "Original Voices," and ending with the "Slam"--a good-natured competition complete with prizes and Applause-o-Meter. Call ArtHaus to sign up to perform. Recommended for adults, ages 16 and up. Cost \$5.00; \$3.00 for students. Sponsored by Dragonfly Books. For more info:

www.arthausdecorah.org or call [563.382.5440](tel:563.382.5440).

Talkstory

Friday, Oct 28, 8:00 pm, Decorah, IA

Presented by ArtHaus, 508 W. Water St, Decorah, IA. True stories told by you! Come to listen or to tell your story in seven minutes or less, with no script or notes, inspired by the theme of the evening. "Treat or Trick." Recommended for adults, ages 16 and up. BYOB ok. For helpful tips on telling a story well, www.arthausdecorah.org/talkstory. Cost \$5.00; \$3.00 for students. For more information:

www.arthausdecorah.org or call [563.382.5440](tel:563.382.5440).

--Area Group Meetings--

Austin Writers' Group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm in the Austin Public Library. All are welcome. Contact facilitator Betty Benner for more info. bennerbj511@charter.net.

Brick House Coffee House Writers meets monthly, every second Friday, 7:00-9:00 pm at the Brick House Coffee House, 412 Third Ave NE, Austin, MN. Writers, storytellers, and poets read their works aloud. All are welcome. Contact facilitators Michael and Bev Cotter, 507-373-4748, cotter6@q.com.

Fourth Tuesday. Writers meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday, 6:30-8:00, at a coffeehouse in Rochester for an informal gathering to discuss whatever writing topic comes up. All are welcome. Location changes as the group grows. Contact Michael Kalmbach, mikekalmbach@gmail.com for each month's location.

Inkslingers Outcry! meets 2nd Thurs. of the month, 7-9 pm at Crossings in Zumbrota. Activities alternate month to month--discussions, exercises, professional presentations, open mic sessions. Basic cost of \$14.00 includes wine and cheese but may vary with speaker fees. www.crossingsatcarnegie.com

Open Mic meets monthly, every third Wednesday at 7:00 pm, at the John Hassler Theater in Plainview. Writers read their works aloud to an audience of their peers. Suggested length is 3-5 minutes. All are welcome. Contact facilitators Dean & Sally Harrington. dean.harrington@fnbplainview.com.

Rochester Library Writers' Group meets monthly on the second Tuesday from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm in Conference Room A of the library. All are welcome. Contact facilitator Michael Kalmbach for more info. mikekalmbach@gmail.com

Southeastern Minnesota Poets, a chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets, meets monthly on the first Wednesday, 6:30 - 8:30 PM at Buena Vista Condo's party room in NE Rochester. Meetings include discussions of poetic forms, optional monthly assignment, poetry sharing and friendly critique. Dues are \$12 per year. Contact president Sue McMullan for more info. suemac.sue@gmail.com

Washington Avenue Writers' Group meets weekly on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm at Christ Episcopal Church, 204 W. Fountain St, Albert Lea. All are welcome. Contact facilitators Rachelle Flieman or Maren Ring for more info. rflieman@charter.net, ringmaren@yahoo.com.

First-timers should double-check with facilitators, as weather and conflicts may change meeting times.



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Section 2: Writing For The Theatre

**Michael Migliacio &
Jeremy Kittleson**

Committing Murder In Mantorville

By Joan Sween

Audiences at "All Hallows' Feast" are going to see a murder happen right before their eyes. After they get their heart rates back to normal and pick up their forks, they're going to be invited to solve the mystery by identifying the killer.

Mantorville Theatre Company's October production of the mystery dinner theatre "All Hallows' Feast" is the brainchild of writers Michael Migliacio and Jeremy Kittleson.

The two playwrights are cautious with details of this production--not wanting to spoil the fun by revealing too much. Generally speaking, however, mystery dinner theatres are interactive productions wherein the dinner is the setting and the audience is "on stage," so to speak. The victim usually gets done in before the salad course and there is often a detective or some other logical character who leads the investigation. The audience is encouraged to chime in, draw conclusions, and pinpoint the perpetrator. The cast mingles with the audience during dinner, and often the performers are so skilled at blending in that the luscious blonde sitting next to you, who picked the raisins out of her bread pudding, can actually turn out to be the murderer. Or maybe it's the waiter? Or the grouchy guy with the big mustache and inadequate social skills?

I asked Michael and Jeremy how they came to do mystery dinner theatres.

Michael, who was raised in the suburbs of Chicago and graduated from Purdue University with a major in computer science and a minor in Japanese language and literature, said, "The year I moved to Minnesota, I went up to Minneapolis on a whim to see a murder mystery dinner theatre that was performed

around Halloween. That particular show was performed as theatre-in-the-round, and contained a lot of improvisation from the actors and lots of audience participation--which I really enjoyed. All of us who went to that show had an absolute blast, and we went back to that same venue year after year. One thing we couldn't help but notice, though, is that there didn't seem to be any sort of event like this in SE Minnesota, so we--my girlfriend Lisa and I--started holding small murder mystery dinners in our basement each Halloween."



Michael Migliacio

Jeremy, who spent most of his life in St. Paul and graduated from the U of M's Carlson School of Management with a triple business major, had never tried writing plays before he met Michael. "About a year ago, Michael and I were talking about our experiences, good and bad, with those boxed sets you can buy to 'host your own murder dinner.' He suggested we attempt to write our own. I was a little hesitant, but he was excited, and that kind of excitement is contagious. I'm very happy about how this script has turned out and although it has been a collective effort to put it together, it was Michael's brainchild."

Michael lives in Rochester; Jeremy is currently in Kasson, planning a move to Rochester; but both have (Continued on page 7)

Murder in Mantorville (cont. from pg 6)
served on the MCT Board and confess their hearts are in the Mantorville theatre.

Michael said, "Jeremy and I both felt that there would be a market for this kind of show around Halloween in southeast Minnesota, especially among groups of young professionals who often travel to the Minneapolis/St. Paul area to participate in this kind of activity during the fall. In addition, it would be a progressive step forward for MTC and something that the theatre company could become known for in the future."

"The audience is a wild card."

Is devising a script that has a basic plot line, but allows for the actors to ad-lib in character, an almost impossible challenge, I asked.

Michael admitted, "Yes, writing a murder mystery is tougher than creating a static script because you have to create what our writing group has dubbed 'Circles of Blame.' 'Circles of Blame' provide motive and counter-motive for each character as the mystery progresses and evidence is unveiled. They allow the actors to shift the blame from one suspect to another. This is especially important if the actors are allowed to interact with the audience at different parts of the production, because the audience is a wild card. You can't really prepare your cast for everything the crowd may or may not do during the show, so you have to do your best to ensure the actors know their characters well enough to answer anything appropriately without revealing something sensitive to a future plot point. Predicting the audience is impossible. Finally, making sure the plot of the show is rock-solid is also vital to crafting a good murder mystery. It doesn't make for a fun experience as a patron when the mystery has a Swiss cheese plot loaded with gaping holes."

"Predicting the audience is impossible."

How about murdering someone right in front of everyone? Does that get tricky, I wondered. "There were 3 conditions to the death I said I'd have no part of," said Jeremy. "No suicide, no reveal of 'he's not

really dead,' and no 'there is no killer, it was a random accident.' People are paying for a murder mystery, and half of that is destroyed if there is no murder. It's almost like cheating and I have felt almost betrayed by other shows I've been to [*that used these tricks*]."

"On average," said Michael, "the cast for murder mysteries tends to be small and the character archetypes end up being very pronounced. This is done so that the audience can keep track of each character. This is especially important if the audience has a role in determining who the murderer is, or is required to make a guess. Keeping track of 20 different names, faces, and personalities would be difficult, even for an experienced theatre patron. I'd say the magic number is somewhere around 5-10 cast members, with 10 being as large as you probably want to go."

"The audience has a role in determining who the murderer is."

"We tried not to cast ourselves," said Jeremy. "The hope was we'd find a full cast and that I would not be onstage. Although we had many good actors try out, we were looking for specific characteristics for each role and a team chemistry--both personality and visually. We spent quite a bit of time going over group scenarios, shifting actors into different roles to play to their strengths and how the relationships on stage would look, and in the end, the best show involved me playing one of the roles."

(Continued on page 8)



Even the most obnoxious critic can sometimes have a valid point. Best to listen to everyone.

Murder in Mantorville (cont. from pg 7)

Commenting on my general remarks about the characters blending in, Michael said, "There are many different ways to approach that problem. I've seen it done both ways. Personally, I prefer to make the audience a part of the show in a passive way--allowing them to comment, heckle/harass the actors, and make guesses as to who the murderer is--as opposed to hiding the murderer in their midst. Although that is certainly a twist that works for shows with smaller audiences. In 'All Hallows' Feast,' all of the actors in the show are suspects. Each and every one of them has the motive--and possibly the means--to murder our victim."

I asked the mystery duo what the charm of dinner theatre was. Why would I want to buy a ticket?

"More than anything else," Michael said, "murder mysteries reflect the Halloween season and provide a unique spin on traditional theatre. 'All Hallows' Feast' is a full experience, combining a five-course meal with a murder mystery filled with laughs, surprises, and intrigue. We've had a lot of fun putting this show together, and I know audiences are really going to enjoy it. I think the bigger question is why *wouldn't* you want to buy a ticket?"

I asked the big question: who is the killer in "All Hallows' Feast?"

"Uh-uh," said Jeremy, shaking his head, "you have to come and see."

I thought of asking if computer science, Japanese, and three business fields were prerequisites for writing dinner theatre mysteries, but decided that would be a different newsletter article.

[See the Performance Schedule section for information on how to buy tickets.]

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Vertigo Theatre Factory

Lindsey Williams

New Director of Theatre; New Play Writing Supporter

By Joan Sween

Lindsey Williams, new director of theatre at Riverland Community College in Austin, was for many years a California girl, but this July she has come back to Minnesota, where she spent most of her childhood. Barely before she had her toothbrush unpacked, I fired off the question that area writers wanted to ask--did she have any plans to support area playwrights and original scripts.



Lindsey Williams

"Yes! When I was living in Los Angeles, I participated in a 24-Hour Play festival in which an entire evening of short one-act plays was written, rehearsed and performed all in a 24-hour period. It was tremendously exciting and one of my favorite experiences that I've ever had in the theatre. It's my hope to produce one of these festivals here on campus in the next year or two. I think it would be a great way to give students an opportunity to try their hand at play writing as well as to bring local playwrights to Riverland to both participate and mentor the students. I'm still in the very early stages of planning, but it's something that I hope will happen soon." (Continued on page 9)

Lindsey Williams (continued from page 8)

Lindsey got her undergraduate degree in theatre from USC and did her graduate work in musical theatre at San Diego State University. She has spent considerable time teaching and working in educational theatre, instructing students as young as 3 years old, all the way up to adults. She has a strong background in acting and directing, having directed professionally around Los Angeles and San Diego, and performed at a number of professional theatres in San Diego. As she has also spent time working at a talent agency in Los Angeles, she has in-depth experience teaching the theatre business to aspiring actors and guiding them in their careers. Her plans for Riverland include serving both the student body and the community.

"It's tough to choose the theatrical season because I want to provide opportunities for students that are challenging and engaging but also produce shows that the community will be excited to see. This year I've tried to find a balance between the two. We have two musicals that are most likely familiar to audiences--'The Fantasticks' and 'RENT.' Both were big hits on- and off-Broadway, so I think they will get our audiences excited about coming to the theatre in addition to providing excellent opportunities for students. The play titles may not be as familiar to audience members--'Be Aggressive' by Annie Weisman and 'Ring Round the Moon' by Jean Anouilh--but they're both shows that I think the students will enjoy working on and find challenging. And they're still shows that I think audience members will love! I hope that our audiences will take a chance and try seeing something unfamiliar...they may be surprised."

Mentioning that Summerset is a strong voice for Riverland's high reputation, I asked if Lindsey had any plans about that summer program this early in the game.

"Absolutely! I'm very excited to be involved in Summerset, and we're already hard at work planning next summer's season. It's still early to announce any special plans, but one thing that I am hoping to do is expand our marketing and increase our online presence. I want more people to know who we are and what we do. There is great theatre happening in Austin, and best of all, it's very affordable!"

Once she gets settled, Lindsey has definite outreach plans.

"I'd love to see the individual theatre communities come together more often and be able to share resources. There's such strong community support for theatre in south and southeastern Minnesota, which we're really lucky to have. My primary goal right now is to get to know the theatres in this area and the community better. As I settle into this job, I'll be looking for ways that we can connect Riverland to other theatres in the area, as well as reach out to parts of the community that might not be as familiar with us or have an involvement with theatre."

Lindsey and husband Sean, a professional writer who comes from a television/film background but now writes comic books, love to travel, and look forward to visiting Lindsey's extended family members located mostly in the Twin Cities and Cambridge areas. Lindsey says she's an avid Scrabble player and crossword puzzle fanatic. Her favorite hobby, however, is SCUBA diving.

It's possible that East Side Lake may not provide her with the same caliber of excitement as the Pacific Ocean, but shoveling snow can be loads of fun, too.

A most warm welcome to a Minnesota girl come home who has exciting plans for Riverland and the area.

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--Theatre Opportunities--

Mystery Writers of America is sponsoring a contest for best play [*plus other written works, see previous Opportunities notice*]. Submitted plays must be previously produced. "All full-length plays produced professionally on Broadway, off Broadway, or through the League of Regional Theatres are eligible, including other regional, local or university theatre and 99 seat equity waiver productions. Full-length plays and re-productions of full-length plays that have gone through significant re-writes and are being produced for the first time in 2010 are eligible for consideration." No entry fee. Deadline November 30, 2011. Margery Flax, Administrative Director, 1140 Broadway, New York, NY 10001, 212-888-8171. Submission guidelines for all types at: www.mysterywriters.org/?q=Edgars-Submissions

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Forrest Musselman

15 Plays & Counting...

By Joan Sween

Forrest Musselman, one of the more prolific playwrights in south/southeastern Minnesota, has just had his 14th play, "Black & White," published by Big Dog Publishing.

"Black & White" is a 30-minute spoof of 1950s TV sitcoms such as "Leave It To Beaver," and "Father Knows Best." The script is chock full of the era's catchphrases, such as "keen," "spiffy," "neat-o," and "gee-willikers."



Forrest Musselman

Big Dog's home office is in Tallevast, FL, where, under the name Big Dog Publishing, the six-year-old company offers plays geared toward the K-12 school market with family friendly plays. The other half of the Florida organization is called Norman Maine Publishing, which offers plays with more mature themes for community and professional theatres, colleges and universities. Other play rental services that represent Forrest's works are Brooklyn Publishers and Contemporary Drama Service.

Forrest teaches 9th and 11th grade English at Rushford-Peterson High School, plus a media arts class for grades 10-12. He directs their all-school play, their one-act contest play, and lends a hand with competitive speech when time allows. He is also the editor of StoryPeople Press, a small press working out of Decorah, IA.

Just when you think he has more balls in the air than most people could manage without dropping, he has just received notice from YouthPlays that they intend to publish his 10-minute play, "Our Song." That will be 15.

How does Forrest find the time to do all that he does? Even better, how does he get all those plays published, when so many other playwrights exist in the limbo of wannabe? Obviously, he's good, but is there more to the story? We asked.

"A lot of my successes are based on researching the market, reading a lot of plays, and persistence. If one publishing house rejects me, then I move on to the next one and I usually have a plan of attack--so to speak--of where I'm going to send the plays next. My favorite place to submit is Brooklyn Publishers just because the editor likes everything I write and they have a big market for high schools--along with Heuer, which now owns Brooklyn.

"My advice is to always hit the big market places first and then work your way down the list until someone picks it up. Eventually someone will along the way. If not, it's probably time to do some serious rewriting. The more you build your resume, the more publishing houses are going to look at your work.

"It's a frustrating process to begin with. My first play was published in 1998 and by 2008, I only had 4 plays published. But I kept writing and submitting and then it started steamrolling and now I'm getting, on average, three plays published a year. So persistence and patience seem to be the key.

"The most frustrating aspect to the whole process is that even the smaller companies want your script produced beforehand. How can you get a play produced if theatres don't want to do original work? How can you get an agent if they don't represent unpublished writers? How can you get published if they don't look at writers with a history? These are all frustrations I had myself when I first started, but I quickly learned that I had to play the game, and with some luck and persistence, I started to crack the shell.

"The requirement of previous production doesn't necessarily mean a full-fledged production. If a script was involved in a workshop environment or even a public reading, sometimes that's good enough. Personally, I would never submit a play without its having been read or workshopped by
(Continued on page 11)

Forrest Musselman (continued from page 10)
someone. There are so many positives from having your script worked with before you submit it for publication. That way you've worked out all the bugs and made it production worthy. I've been fortunate in that I teach high school theatre and have been able to workshop and produce my own one-acts for years.

"A lot of the published writers who flourish in the youth market or community theatre are working the local resources. Plus, it's all about networking too. All of my productions outside of the high school world have a been result of being involved with a community theatre or just staying in contact with various people I know within the theatre world.

"My best advice is to just keep working the local angles to fine tune your scripts, and that will be enough to start the submission process which eventually leads to acceptance and publication."

---Events & Classes---

Play Dates **Sept 17, 10-11:30**
This is a Words Players "2013 and Beyond" brainstorming session for the future. Bring us your ideas. Early interest and involvement will help us gauge interest and participation in order to determine whether or not we do a show, or how we do a show – to what level. Play Dates give you a chance to check out how you can get plugged in, and give us some ideas. Meets at 14 SW 4th St, Rochester. Questions: Rebecca Ohnstad, rjobsister@gmail.com

Minnesota Shorts Festival of Plays

Performances of 20 winning short play scripts from their 2011 annual contest.

7:30 pm Sept. 8

7:30 pm Sept. 9

10 plays each evening

Performing at West High School Theater,
at the corner of Stoltzman Road
and Riverfront Drive, Mankato.

Order tickets for one evening of 10 plays or both evenings for all 20 plays on the Minnesota Shorts web site, <http://www.mnshorts.com/>

---Wanted/Available---

Wanted: Technical People

Vertigo Theatre Factory is looking for volunteers to fill the following roles in its March 2012 production of Gruesome Playground Injuries, as part of the Rochester Civic Theatre Lobby Series: **Set design/builder, Lighting/Sound design, Bloodwork specialist, Costumer.** This production will be directed by Eric Decker. Any inquiries about these positions can be pursued by phoning Bob Sanborn, Vertigo Artistic Director, at 507-319-0484 or by e-mailing Bob at robert.sanborn@roch.edu

Wanted: Cinderella Coach

Kingsland Public Schools is looking for a Cinderella coach for last two weeks in April & first two weeks in May, 2012. Contact: Danielle Vogel, danielle.vogel@gmail.com.

Available: Costumes

Ye Olde Opera House in Spring Grove is open to renting any costumes in their inventory. The usual price is \$10.00 per costume, with extra consideration given to high schools on tight budgets. Contact: Pat McManimon-Moe, crowerkz@mchsi.com.

---Auditions---

One-Act Play Festival

Presented by Words Players. Auditions for student-written plays, Sept 6, 4-7 pm at 14 SW 4th St, Rochester. Performances Oct 28 & 29. Questions: Rebecca Ohnstad, rjobsister@gmail.com

A Christmas Carol

Presented by Words Players. Auditions Sept 12 (adult auditions) & Sept 13 (youth auditions), 4:00-8:30 pm each night, at 14 SW 4th St., Rochester. Due to the smaller number of available roles, cast size may be limited. Performances Nov 26-Dec 17. Director Daved Driscoll. Questions: Rebecca Ohnstad, rjobsister@gmail.com

Home Games

Presented by Rochester Civic Theatre. Auditions Sept. 13 & 14, 7:00 pm. Performances Oct 21-Nov 6. Director Greg Miller. Questions: greg@rochestercivictheatre.org

----Auditions Continued----

Kimberley Akimbo

Presented by Vertigo Theatre Factory. Auditions Sept 17 & 18 in the Rochester Civic Theatre Lobby. This play takes a darkly comic look at the absurdities that make up the existence of Kimberly, a 16-year-old girl with an advanced aging condition. Performances Nov 5-13. Directed by Leisa Luis-Grill. Questions: Robert Sanborn, 507-319-0484.

Halloween Warm-Up

Presented by Matchbox Children's Theatre, Austin. Auditions for performers age 12 to adult, Sept 18, 6:30-8 pm, at the Historic Paramount Theatre, downtown Austin. For two magical nights called Halloween Warm-Up, the Hormel Nature Center is under special enchantment especially designed to appeal to young people. Actors are needed to portray creatures, critters, and spirits of the night. For more information, call 437-9078.

Irving Berlin's White Christmas

Presented by Rochester Civic Theatre. Auditions: October 4 & 5 at 7:00pm. Performances Dec 2-18. Directed by Gregory Stavrou. Questions: gregory@rochestercivictheatre.org

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---Performances---

Little Shop of Horrors

June 17-Oct 28 (in rep)

Presented by Commonweal Theatre Company, St Mane Theatre, Lanesboro. Info & tickets: info@commonwealththeatre.org

Willow Weep For Me

August 26-September 11

Original script by Sandra Hennings Miller. Presented by Mantorville Theatre Company at the Mantorville Opera House. Gen. admission tickets at the door. Info: www.mantorvillain.com

To Kill A Mockingbird

August 26-Nov 13 (in rep)

Presented by Commonweal Theatre Company, St Mane Theatre, Lanesboro. Info & tickets: info@commonwealththeatre.org

Dearly Departed

Sept 9-25

Presented by Rochester Civic Theatre. Box Off: 507-282-8481. Info: Gregory Stavrou, gstavrou@rochestercivictheatre.org

Billboard

Sept 9-Oct 1

Comedy/drama presented by Rochester Repertory Theatre. For info, Box Office: 507-289-1737 or boxoffice@rochesterrep.org.

Pinocchio

Sept 17-Oct 16

Presented by the Jon Hassler Theater, Plainview. Based on Carlo Collodi's familiar folk tale; adapted and directed by Jon Fuson. Box Office 507-534-2900
Info: tracy@johhasslertheater.org

Doubt

Sept 22-24, 28-Oct 1

Presented by Albert Lea Community Theatre. Box Office: 507-377-4371 or actonbroadwayboxoffice@gmail.com

Plaza Suite

Oct 6-9

Presented by Ye Olde Opera House in the downtown Opera House, Spring Grove. Info: crowerkz@mchsi.com

Scenes from the Wrong Side of the Brain

Oct 7 & 8

Oct 28, Nov 11 & 12

An evening of music and theatre presented by Vertigo Theatre Factory Oct 7 & 8 in the Rochester Civic Theatre Lobby and Oct 28, Nov 11 & 12 in the Barnbar (Rochester, on 11th Ave NW, north of 75th St. Call for specific directions.). The evening includes music by BE, a production of "Aria da Capo," and a production of "Thailand: What's Love Got to do With It?" an original script written and acted by Mairtin deCogain. Questions & ticket info: Bob Sandborn, 507-319-0484.

The Fantasticks

Oct 7-16

Presented by Riverland Community College, Austin, in the Frank W. Bridges theatre. Box Office open Monday-Friday, 11 am to 1 pm, during the two weeks prior to performances, 507-433-0595. Info: lindsey.williams@riverland.edu

All Hallows' Feast (dinner theatre)

Oct 14-30

Mystery dinner theatre presented by Mantorville Theatre Company at the Mantorville Opera House. Dinner catered by the County Seat Coffee House in Mantorville. Tickets for Oct. 16 & 22 are already SOLD OUT. Order tickets thru the web site, <http://mantorvillain.com/>, or call 507-218-1266 after Sept. 1.

Home Games

Oct 21-Nov 6

Presented by Rochester Civic Theatre. Box Off: 507-282-8481. Info: Gregory Stavrou, gstavrou@rochestercivictheatre.org

One-Act Play Festival

Oct 28 & 29

Presented by Words Players at 14 4th St. SW, Rochester. A selection of plays written, directed, and acted by area young people. Questions: rebeccaohnstad@northlandwords.org

Kimberley Akimbo

Nov 5-6 & 12-13

Presented by Vertigo Theatre Factory in the Lobby of Rochester Civic Theatre. Questions & ticket info: Bob Sandborn, 507-319-0484.

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