

# General Policies and Submission Guidelines

This document is designed to assist professional theaters in managing public relations and related duties. Although this document was prepared specifically for EncoreMichigan.com, press release and photo guidelines are equally applicable for most print and broadcast outlets.

## OVERVIEW

EncoreMichigan.com is web-based media company focused on Michigan's professional theater industry. Founded in 2008, it is the state's premier source for free, up-to-the-minute news and information about this often-ignored segment of the arts community.

Designed as a one-stop shop for consumers, industry professionals and others with an interest in live theater, EncoreMichigan.com is updated daily and packed with insightful reviews, comprehensive show listings, audition notices, podcasts and much, much more.

Original content is created by a dedicated team of veteran freelance journalists and theater critics. In addition to material created exclusively for EncoreMichigan.com, links are also provided to reviews and stories of interest that appear in other local and national online publications. Together, this makes EncoreMichigan.com the most complete source for professional theater news anywhere in Michigan.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- What You Need to Know About EncoreMichigan.com and The Wilde Awards – Page 3
- The Basics: What We Need From You – Page 4
- Reviews – Page 5
- Feature Stories & Previews – Page 6
- Calendar Listings – Page 7
- Audition Notices – Page 8
- Classes & Workshops – Page 8
- Job Listings & Other Notices – Page 8
- Theater Profiles – Page 9
- Advertising – Page 9
- Press Release Submission Guidelines – Page 10
- A Checklist: What to Include in Every Press Release – Page 11
- Photo Submission Guidelines – Page 12
- Errors in a Review or Story – Page 13
- A Second Set of Eyes – Page 13
- Constant Contact, Facebook & Social Media – Page 13
- About EncoreMichigan.com – Page 14
- About The Wilde Awards – Page 14
- And Finally: Our Contact Info – Page 14

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ENCOREMICHIGAN.COM & THE WILDE AWARDS

**If EncoreMichigan.com's mission as a media company is to focus on the state's professional theaters, what criteria do you use to determine which theaters are "professional" and which are not? How do you determine which theaters you'll cover and which you won't?**

Defining the term "professional" has been one of the most contentious and destructive debates within our theater industry for several decades. While many will disagree with our definition, it's one we believe allows us to provide our readers with the broadest spectrum of choices possible for their entertainment dollars while satisfying a traditional understanding of what the word "professional" means.

*A theater is professional if they pay its artistic personnel (such as actors, directors, designers, technicians, etc.) for their services. By what method they are paid doesn't matter (nor is it any of our business), whether it's by contract, a set fee per performance, a split of the box office, etc. (We do allow some wiggle room, however, for companies that utilize unpaid performers in shows that have large groups of chorus members, dancers, and other such non-lead and supporting roles, and for companies that mix professional and non-professional performers for educational purposes.)*

As such, both Equity and non-Equity professional companies are included in our coverage. Community theaters and most educational theater programs are not. (Membership in organizations such as The Community Theatre Association of Michigan, for example, is an automatic disqualification.)

**Is there an annual membership fee required for coverage on EncoreMichigan.com? Is a theater required to pay a fee to have their shows reviewed or to have a profile on the site?**

No. Theaters are not required to be a "member," pay a membership fee, or make any type of payment in order to receive coverage or have a presence on EncoreMichigan.com.

Our policy is to provide coverage to all professional theaters in the state free of charge, including reviews (if eligible), previews, theater profiles and calendar listings.

**What about The Wilde Awards? How are shows considered for a Wilde Award?**

All theaters whose productions are reviewed by EncoreMichigan.com are eligible for possible Wilde Awards nominations and awards.

As always, nominations for The Wilde Awards are based solely on reviews assigned to critics by EncoreMichigan.com. As such, only shows that have been reviewed by EncoreMichigan.com are eligible for possible nominations and awards.

The review year used for Wilde Awards nominations is *June through May, inclusive*.

At the discretion of the publisher, editors and critics, special awards may also be given each year.

## THE BASICS: WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

### Everything starts with a press release!

Everything we do to provide coverage of your shows and events begins with a press release. It's that simple.

For most theaters, the process begins with a season announcement, from which we build our internal master calendar. It's this calendar that allows us to plan our budgets and coverage – especially our reviews – far in advance. Without it, your shows may not be on our radar at the time we build our monthly review schedules, which means your shows may not get reviewed during the busiest parts of the season. (Although we try to squeeze surprise shows into our schedule whenever we can, it's not always possible due to heavy workloads and critic availability.) *So when writing your season announcements, please remember to include the opening and closing dates for each show or event; without them, your shows cannot be entered into our internal master calendar.*

The next step, then, is for theaters to send out an individual press release for every show or event of their season – and we need to get these press release in a timely manner: at least three weeks prior to the event or show opening. Without it, we may not include your show or event in our coverage. (Why is that, you may be wondering, if we already have a season announcement from you? Because as we've learned the hard way, dates change, shows change and events get canceled, and we don't want to assume that what was sent out much earlier is still correct today!)

And because we are a visual medium, every press release you submit must include some type of art – whether it's a rehearsal shot, a company logo, or a poster-like design (but without any text on it except for a show or event title). *Failure to comply with this requirement may delay the posting of your press release to the website.*

Information on what needs to be included in every press release can be found on pages 9-10 of this document.

### Reviews – and what we need from you before we ever show up at your

**door:** Before we can even schedule a review of one of your shows, we need to know when your official press night is. Because different theaters have different policies regarding press nights – and sometimes they change from show to show – it's important to include in the press release announcing your upcoming production the date or dates when the press is invited to review your show. A simple sentence such as “Press night for this production is Friday, Oct. 3 at 8 p.m.” or “The press is invited to review the production on Oct. 3 and 4 at 8 p.m.” placed after the conclusion of the release is sufficient.

In addition, we cannot run your review without a production shot to accompany it. As such, please make sure to send us a selection of high-res, attention-getting production shots by no later than the morning after our critic attended the show. *(These photos should be different from those sent with the press release.)* Failure to do so will delay the posting of your review. (And please note: We will not post a review using poster-like designs, logos or any other type of graphic.)

# REVIEWS

## Which productions will be reviewed?

EncoreMichigan.com reviews shows produced and/or presented by the state's professional theaters only. This includes both Equity and non-Equity companies located throughout Michigan, as well as the "road houses" that book national and regional touring companies.

Only productions that run FOUR CONSECUTIVE DAYS OR MORE or TWO WEEKENDS OR MORE will be reviewed.

Although it is our objective to review as many productions as possible, there is no guarantee that every production that meets the above criteria will be reviewed.

We generally set our review schedules approximately two weeks prior to the start of a new month. As such, the earlier we are notified of a production, the more likely it is to be reviewed. Budget constraints and critic availability will determine the possibility of adding last-minute shows to our schedule.

## Which productions will NOT be reviewed?

Dance programs, stand-up comedy and theater for young audiences featuring non-adult actors will not be reviewed, nor will shows staged by non-professional theaters of any kind (such as community theaters).

## Which performances will be reviewed?

Every effort is made to review opening night performances. However, schedule conflicts or heavy workloads during peak periods may dictate otherwise.

It is our policy NOT to review preview performances. However, should a schedule conflict dictate otherwise, and if the theater agrees, a preview performance will be reviewed – and noted as such in the review.

## My show is being reviewed. What do I need to know?

Reviews will generally appear online within 24 hours after our critic visits your theater.

In general, most critics prefer aisle seats. (It makes note taking more comfortable for both the critic and whomever is stuck sitting next to them.) So unless other arrangements have been made, please reserve aisle seats for the critics.

If a program is NOT provided at the performance, the critic must be given a sheet with the names of the actors, director, technical personnel, etc. (with all names spelled correctly). If the show being reviewed is a musical, song titles (in order of appearance) and who sings them must also be provided.

**REMINDER:** Our reviews cannot be posted without a production photo. Logos, headshots or other non-production shots are not appropriate for reviews and will not be used. So please make sure production photos are e-mailed to us BEFORE our critic arrives at your theater or by no later than the morning after. Reviews will NOT be posted until a proper production photo is received.

## **FEATURE STORIES & PREVIEWS:**

### **How often will EncoreMichigan.com run previews and feature stories?**

Our objective is to run as many feature stories or previews as the budget will allow. However, budget restrictions, time constraints and last-minute story cancelations occasionally interfere with the schedule.

### **How do you decide which stories, programs and people to feature?**

There's no set policy. We simply try to highlight a wide variety of projects and people we think our readers would enjoy learning about.

We do, however, make every effort to "share the spotlight" with as many different theater companies across the state as possible. However, theaters that produce more work – or more innovative work – throughout the year may receive more coverage than some others.

### **If I have a story to pitch, what do I do?**

Simply email us or pick up a phone and call. But don't wait till three days before you open. Please contact us at least THREE WEEKS in advance of your opening to make your pitch! Any later than that, and the slots (and the budget) may already be spoken for!

## CALENDAR LISTINGS

### **How do I get our shows included in your calendar?**

All you have to do is send us your press release – and we'll do the rest!

Press releases should be sent at least three weeks prior to the opening of your event. Please see "Press Release Submission Guidelines" for complete details. *PLEASE NOTE: We no longer share a calendar system with Pride Source Media Group, and as such, press releases must be sent to both companies if coverage by both is desired.*

### **How often is the calendar database updated?**

The online calendar system is updated regularly. Current-week listings are made active every Sunday on the EncoreMichigan.com homepage.

### **Are only professional productions included in the online calendar system?**

Yes; only productions staged by professional theaters are listed in the EncoreMichigan.com calendar.

However, other events such as benefits and fundraisers are not included in the calendar, but are often found in the news section and/or on the industry page.

## AUDITION NOTICES

### **How do I go about getting my auditions posted on EncoreMichigan.com?**

As a service to the entire theater community, we'll gladly post audition notices for professional, non-professional, and collegiate/university productions free of charge! However, we require all audition notices to be submitted using a specific template we've created, which can be found online at <http://www.encoremichigan.com/professionals/>. Notices provided in any other format will be returned to the sender with the request to resubmit it using the template. *(We will NOT do the work for you!)*

### **How soon should I submit the audition notice?**

The earlier the better – but not TOO soon! Just don't wait till a few days before the auditions are scheduled.

### **How long will the audition notice run?**

We will keep the audition notice active until the auditions have been concluded.

## CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

### **How do I go about getting my classes and workshops posted on EncoreMichigan.com?**

We'll gladly post these, too, free of charge.

All notices for classes and workshops should be submitted as a standard press release. (Please refer to the section "What to Include in Every Press Release" for details.) Please include with your press release a logo, graphic or photo to accompany it online.

### **Where will my notice appear on EncoreMichigan.com?**

All class and workshop notices are posted on the industry page.

## JOB LISTINGS & OTHER NOTICES

### **I have a job opening at my theater. How do I list it on**

**EncoreMichigan.com?** Submit it as either a press release or as a formal job posting – we'll run it on the industry page free of charge either way.

### **How long will you keep the listing online?**

We'll keep it online until you tell us to take it down. So please include an expiration date with your submission! (We won't run it forever!)



## THEATER PROFILES

### **Which theaters are eligible to have a profile on EncoreMichigan.com?**

Every Michigan-based professional theater whose shows we either include in our calendar or review is eligible to have a profile on EncoreMichigan.com. In fact, for technical reasons, it's a requirement!

### **How do I get my theater's profile online? How do I submit the information to you?**

We require all theaters to submit their profile via an easy-to-use template we created for just that purpose.

To obtain the template, simply email us at [encorepress@gmail.com](mailto:encorepress@gmail.com) and request it! Once we receive the completed template and the required jpegs, we'll get it online!

### **Who is responsible for updating our profile? How often should we update it?**

It is every theater's responsibility to update their profiles. This should occur any time a change occurs that renders the current information out-of-date, such as box office hour changes, address changes, etc.

Simply email us at [encorepress@gmail.com](mailto:encorepress@gmail.com) with the needed changes and we'll be happy to make them.

## ADVERTISING

### **Does EncoreMichigan.com accept advertising? If so, how do I find out about rates and opportunities?**

Yes, EncoreMichigan.com accepts advertising. In fact, there are numerous opportunities to advertise across all of our platforms, including the website, our newsletters and via social media.

For rates and complete details, please contact David Kiley (734-276-7183 or [encorepress@gmail.com](mailto:encorepress@gmail.com)).

# PRESS RELEASE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

## What is the deadline to submit press releases?

Submit all press releases at least 3 weeks prior to your program's opening.

## Where do I e-mail my press release?

E-mail all press releases to the following addresses: [encorepress@gmail.com](mailto:encorepress@gmail.com) \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Theater-related press information sent to addresses other than that shown above might not find their way to the appropriate people within EncoreMichigan.com!

## I'm old school and send my press releases by surface mail.

Please don't. Theaters don't do that anymore.

## What word processing program should I use to create my press release?

If you are submitting your press release as an attachment to an e-mail, use only standard word processing programs to create the document, such as *Microsoft Word* – and use only standard fonts such as *Times*, *Times Roman* or *Helvetica*.

## Should I send the press release as an attachment to an e-mail or should I embed it in the e-mail?

You're safer sending it as an attachment to the e-mail. If you are embedding your press release within the e-mail itself (that is, not sending it as an attachment), please be aware that there are few industry e-mail standards. Because each e-mail program has its own unique quirks, please do not get too fancy when creating your press release. What looks bold, italicized or flashy on your computer screen might look like ancient Sanskrit or computer gibberish on your recipients'!

## What if I like to add logos, photos and graphics to my press release?

Please do not embed photos, logos or graphics into either the Word document or the e-mail itself. Because of technical differences among the different e-mail programs, recipients are often unable to detach or save embedded graphics or photos.

If you really, really want to send out “pretty” press releases with all the fancy bells and whistles, please send them as Adobe PDFs. But please make sure they can be saved as text files, or that the text can be copied and pasted into another document.

# A CHECKLIST: WHAT TO INCLUDE IN EVERY PRESS RELEASE:

## What should I include in my press release?

- At the top of your release, above the headline, please include:
  1. The name, phone number and e-mail address of your press contact. *(This information will not be published.)*
- Start the press release with a headline.
- In the body of your press release, please include the following basic information:
  1. **Who** – The full, complete name of the producing and/or sponsoring organization(s);
  2. **What** – The full, complete title of the event and a brief description;
  3. **When** – the complete list of dates and times of the event *(and not just the range of dates)*;
  4. **Where** – The name and complete address of the event location (including zip code);
  5. **Why** – A brief statement, if your release is announcing a special event (such as a benefit or fundraiser);
  6. **How much tickets cost** – Never leave this out!
  7. **How readers can obtain tickets or other information** – please include both a box office phone number AND a Web address, and include the AREA CODE with all phone numbers.
- *Following the conclusion of the press release, please note which performance is the designated press night so that critics show up on the appropriate date and time.*

## What ELSE should I include with my press release?

- All press releases should be accompanied by either:
  1. A publicity photo of the show or event described in the press release;
  2. A graphic pertaining to the show or event;
  3. Or the producing or sponsoring company's logo.
- All photos should include a cutline and a photo credit.
  1. Cutlines should be placed at the end of your press release, immediately following – but noticeably separated from – the text of the press release.

# PHOTO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

## When should I submit my photos?

A promotional photo, graphic or logo should be submitted with every press release.

*For shows reviewed by EncoreMichigan.com: Production photos are required and should be e-mailed to us by no later than the morning after our critic visited your theater. These photos should be different from those sent with the press release. **REMEMBER:** Reviews will **NOT** be posted without an appropriate production photo.*

## Where do I send the photos?

Send all photos, logos and graphics to [encorepress@gmail.com](mailto:encorepress@gmail.com)

If your company uses Dropbox or a similar online service to distribute photos and/or press materials, please make sure memberships, userids and passwords are not required to access them.

## What format should I send them in?

All photos submitted should be in JPEG format; hard-copy photos will not be accepted.

Do **NOT** embed photos into the body of your press releases or into the body of the e-mail; always send them as separate attachments!

## What file size should they be? And what resolution?

Photos submitted should be high-resolution, shot at no less than 300 DPI (dots per inch).

In order to take advantage of our website's graphics capabilities, all photos, graphics and logos should be no less than 800 pixels wide and 450 characters tall. If possible, limit the size of JPEGs to no more than about 1 megabyte each.

## Should I submit color photos? Black & white?

Color photos are always preferred. *But black-and-white can look cool, too!*

## What else should I include with my photos?

A cutline must be included with every promotional or production photo submitted. The cutline must identify each person in the photo – from left to right and top to bottom – and include the name of the production and the production company. And always include photo credits with your photos.

Finally, please make sure the filename of the JPEG and the identifier with the cutline match!

## **ERRORS IN A REVIEW OR STORY**

### **What if I spot a mistake in a review or a story?**

Although every effort is made to be 100% accurate with our reviews, stories and calendar listings, an occasional error does find its way into print. Should that happen, simply call or send us an e-mail right away and we'll be happy to make the correction as quickly as possible!

## **A SECOND SET OF EYES**

### **Why does EncoreMichigan.com sometimes send a second critic to one of our shows?**

Based on recommendations from the reviewing critic or other related feedback, EncoreMichigan.com's management team may decide a "second set of eyes" may be needed to assess a show for possible Wilde Awards nominations. Such requests will come from the company's editorial team only.

Although we may not identify the reason a second critic is attending a show (so that we don't tip our hand regarding potential nominations), we appreciate every effort theaters make on our behalf when such requests are made. And we totally understand if such requests cannot be granted for whatever reason.

## **CONSTANT CONTACT, FACEBOOK & SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **We plan to use Constant Contact or another similar resource to send out our press releases. Is that a good idea?**

While Constant Contact and other similar resources certainly have an important part to play in developing business for your theater, we suggest they should NOT be used to send out or distribute your press releases to the media.

Why? Because all of these resources have unacceptable rates of delivery, due primarily to spam filters and tight controls placed on e-mail servers by IT managers, which means many of your media contacts may never see your press releases.

Therefore, it is best to send out your press releases via standard e-mail as discussed elsewhere in this document.

### **We post our press releases, audition notices and other information on Facebook. Does this mean we can stop sending the information to the media via the traditional methods?**

Not at all! Facebook and other social media outlets serve a very important function, but they SUPPLEMENT traditional PR methods, not replace them; each serves a different purpose.

As such, EncoreMichigan.com will NOT use information observed on Facebook or other social media outlets. If you fail to send us the information via the traditional methods, we will not cover the event.

## ABOUT ENCOREMICHIGAN.COM

EncoreMichigan.com was established in 2008 by Livonia, Michigan-based Pride Source Media Group and longtime producer and critic Donald V. Calamia. Ownership was assumed by the Michigan Equity Theatre Alliance in August 2012, but META's closure in June 2014 left EncoreMichigan.com ownerless (and budgetless) for several months.

EncoreMichigan.com and Encore Media LLC are not affiliated with The Encore Musical Theatre Company of Dexter, MI.

### **Staff:**

David Kiley: owner, publisher and editor-in-chief

Anne Kiley: managing editor

## ABOUT THE WILDE AWARDS

The Wilde Awards – established in 2002 by Pride Source Media Group and named in honor of 19th century playwright Oscar Wilde – honor the best productions, performances and technical work produced or presented by professional theaters throughout Michigan. Nominations are based on reviews written by EncoreMichigan.com's team of professional critics. Only shows produced or presented by Michigan's professional theaters and opera companies – both union and non-union, large and small – and reviewed by EncoreMichigan.com's critics are eligible for a Wilde Awards nomination.

### **Staff:**

David Kiley: executive producer

## AND FINALLY: OUR CONTACT INFO

For questions pertaining to our theater coverage, our submission guidelines or anything else about EncoreMichigan.com, please contact David Kiley (734-276-7183 or [encorepress@gmail.com](mailto:encorepress@gmail.com))