

Center for the Arts of Greater Lapeer's "Pix Theatre"
MCACA & Long Haul Productions
Creating Connection 2020
Audio Transcript

MARY BETH BURNS: My name is Mary Beth Burns. And I teach theater at the Pix Theater in Lapeer, Michigan. Before COVID, The Pix was producing one children's show per year, plus classes.

JESSICA CUMMINGS: My name is Jessica Cummings. I am 17 years old and I started participating in the Pix Theater two years ago.

MARY BETH: The kids broke it to us. One of the girls said, "School is closed!" So when that happened, we did scramble ...

JESSICA CUMMINGS: And then that's when I talked to Mary Beth and say, Hey, you know, we can do virtual programs too. Right? And then next thing we know,

SOUND: Bells

MARY BETH: We had a weekly virtual radio mystery show that aired live every Friday night at seven, with a focus on the Golden Age of radio.

AUDIO FROM PLAY: This is Gavin Laundry, bringing you the first in our series of stories of the unusual. Lights ... out ... everybody ...

MARY BETH: I just started going through the archives and picking out scripts that are in the public domain.

AUDIO FROM PLAY: We're alone, me and you. And the blood in your veins ...

AUDIO FROM PLAY: What?

AUDIO FROM PLAY: Will he live? I couldn't touch you. But now he's dead!

AUDIO FROM PLAY: What do you want of me, what do you want!?

MARY BETH: In addition to that, I worked with some students to create a radio show.

AUDIO FROM PLAY: Five years ago in a small town located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, many children disappeared. The police have had no luck in finding anyone.

MUSIC

MARY BETH: Everybody seemed enthusiastic. We had good attendance.

LEAH HOCH: I am Leah Hoch and I am thirteen years old. I started going to the Lapeer Pix art theater last year. There was really nothing to do around the house. And I decided, I guess we can go do plays online because I can't go out of the house and do them.

MARY BETH: Many of them live in rural areas and it would be hard to get to places anyway. This is just another excellent way of leveling the playing field, provided they have wifi.

LEAH: It's more happy things to do other than just sitting in your bed, doing homework, and when you're done just watching TV.

MUSIC

MARY BETH: We extended programming into the fall.

ANNOUNCER: Good evening, and welcome to the Center for the Arts Youth Theater Program presentation of Virtual Family.

MARY BETH: It's a family and they're called the Virtuals.

JESSICA: Virtual Family was an entire play you can make at home. No set, no costumes. Audience members would also be able to virtually watch.

MARY BETH: The script already has them in separate rooms. So this was something they could do from their own home.

LEAH AS AALIX: My name is AAlIx.

LEAH: AALIX is kinda like I was an Alexa.

LEAH AS AALIX: Spelled A A L I X. That stands for Artificial Assistant and Life Instructor Extraordinaire.

MARY BETH: The Virtuals have an artificial life intelligence bot, AAlix, who helps mom in the kitchen.

JESSICA AS MOM: AAlix, do you mind helping me please?

JESSICA: I wanted to be the mom because she's a little more sassy.

JESSICA AS MOM: I need a recipe for turkey meatballs, please.

LEAH AS AALIX: I'd be glad to help. Turkey is a transcontinental country located mostly on the Anatolian peninsula, with a small portion on the Balkan peninsula.

LEAH: So my internet is not good, because we live in the middle of the woods. It cuts out. So you would wait and then after like three seconds you would speak again.

JESSICA: It definitely was hard at first understanding the lags and understanding the glitches.

JESSICA AS MOM: (sighs) AAlx, please find me a recipe for the food meatballs.

LEAH AS AALIX: Meatballs is a 1979 summer camp comedy featuring a young Bill Murray as Tripper.

JESSICA: There were even times when AAlix would get the mother sidetracked.

JESSICA AS MOM: Oh, but I do love a young Bill Murray. Wonder if that's on Netflix or Amazon? Oh wait, Mom, pay attention (clears voice). AAlix, you got the turkey part, right, and the meat part right. But I want it in a ball form. Not loaf. I mean, you got two out of three.

MUSIC

LEAH AS AALIX: Now playing, Two Out of Three Ain't Bad, by Meatloaf.

JESSICA AS MOM: AAlix, stop and listen to me! Don't get me wrong. That is a great song, but I'm not in the mood for Meatloaf right now. I want meatballs, AAlix!

JESSICA: By the performance we knew what to do in order to help each other with the cues

LEAH IN PLAY: Let me make sure I heard you correctly. Would you like a recipe for turkey meatballs?

JESSICA AS MOM: Yes AAlix, please.

LEAH AS AALEX: Here's a a recipe from Yummy in My Tummy dot food. Mix two pounds of ground turkey with one cup of breadcrumbs, salt ...

JESSICA: And everything was forgiven as soon she gave her the recipe

LEAH AS AALIX:... and baked for 20 minutes at 375 degrees.

JESSICA AS MOM: Wow, I don't know what I would do without you.

LEAH AS AALIX: I'm afraid I did not understand your request. Please, let me try again.

JESSICA AS MOM: Oh, AAlix!

MUSIC

LEAH: It was kinda stressful, but I'm pretty proud of how I dealt with it. It did help me get through being bored.

JESSICA: Theater to us is the happiest place to be. It's our escape to join these productions and plays. We do want to go back physically as soon as we can.

LEAH: Oh, I really want to go back so bad, because when I'm on the stage and I look directly at the audience, I feel like, wow, there's a lot of people and I have to like meet the play standards.

JESSICA: I miss it so much. I love seeing people's interactions. I do love seeing all my friends. Theater physically, honestly, it's a different experience than anyone can see online.

MARY BETH: It's gonna to be great. There will be tears.

MUSIC UP AND ENDS