

THE BIG READ IN WAYNE COUNTY

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
by Mark Twain



Mark Dawidziak Bio

Mark Dawidziak has been the television critic at the Cleveland Plain Dealer since July 1999. During his fifteen years at the Akron Beacon Journal, he held such posts as TV columnist, movie critic and critic-at-large.

Before moving to Ohio in 1983, he worked as a theater, film and TV critic at newspapers in Tennessee and Virginia. He began his journalism career in the late '70s at the Associated Press and Knight-Ridder bureaus in Washington, D.C.

Also an author and playwright, his many books include the 1994 horror novel *Grave Secrets* and two histories of landmark TV series: *The Columbo Phile: A Casebook* (1989) and *The Night Stalker Companion* (1997). A recognized Mark Twain scholar, his acclaimed books on the author include *Mark My Words: Mark Twain on Writing* (1996) and *Horton Foote's The Shape of the River: The Lost Teleplay About Mark Twain* (2003). He frequently is invited to lecture on Twain or television history at universities, libraries and museums.

His 11th book, *The Bedside, Bathtub, & Armchair Companion to Dracula*, was published this June by Continuum. He is currently collaborating with Paul Bauer on a biography of "hobo writer" Jim Tully, a forgotten author hailed as "America's Gorky" and as a literary superstar in the '20s and '30s. It will be published in 2010 by the Kent State University Press.

His work on the horror side of the street also includes a play (*The Tell-Tale Play*), short stories and comic books scripts. Several of his essays and introductions appear in *Richard Matheson's Kolchak Scripts* (2003) and *Bloodlines: Richard Matheson's Dracula, I Am Legend, and Other Vampire Stories* (2006), two books he edited for Gauntlet Press. He contributed the career appreciation and overview to *Produced and Directed by Dan Curtis* (2004) and he is the creative consultant to Moonstone's comic book series *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*.

Dawidziak and his wife, actress Sara Showman, founded the Largely Literary Theater Company in 2002. Dedicated to promoting literacy and literature, the company has staged his three-person version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and his two-act play based on sketches by Mark Twain, *The Reports of My Death Are Greatly Exaggerated*. In addition to directing the Largely Literary plays, he portrays Twain and Dickens. He met his wife when both were cast in a regional theater production of Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor* (he played the Anton Chekhov role, later appearing with her as the H.L. Mencken character in *Inherit the Wind*).

As a performer, he has been a member of two comedy teams (using the stage name Mark Daniels). In 1993, he reunited with one of his former partners to win the routine contest at the first-ever Abbott & Costello Convention.

His Critics' Classics video essay on director Frank Capra's *Meet John Doe* was shown regularly on the American Movie Classics cable channel, and he has appeared in such documentaries as the A&E *Biography* profile of Peter Falk. He has written the liner notes for the Columbia House Video Library's Collector's Editions of several TV series, including *Columbo*, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, *Quincy*, *The Odd Couple*, *3rd Rock from the Sun*, *The Carol Burnett Show*, *F Troop*, *Hart to Hart*, *Magnum, p.i.* and *Murder, She Wrote*.

Dawidziak also has been a regular contributor to such magazines as *TV Guide*, *Commonwealth*, *Cinefantastique*, *Scarlet Street*, *Mystery Scene*, *Sci-Fi Universe*, *Not of This Earth*, *Knoxville Lifestyle*, *Self-Reliant*, *Ohio Magazine* and *Parent's Choice*. A member of the Television Critics Association's board of directors for five years, he has won five Cleveland Press Club awards for entertainment writing, as well as a Society of Professional Journalists award for coverage of minority issues.

A journalism graduate of George Washington University, he was born in Huntington, New York. He lives in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, with his wife and their daughter, Rebecca "Becky" Claire.



About The Big Read

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The NEA presents The Big Read in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. Support for The Big Read is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Transportation for The Big Read is provided by Ford.

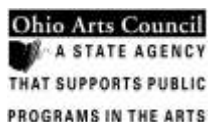
Wayne County is one of 268 communities nationwide participating in The Big Read from September 2009-June 2010. To date, the NEA has funded more than 800 Big Read programs in the nation's towns and cities. From March 8th, our community will celebrate *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain with a full calendar of events including speakers, theatre performances, book discussions, music, and family activity days around Wayne County.

For more information on this event, please contact the Wayne Center for the Arts at 330-264-2787. You also can view a full calendar of events for The Big Read in Wayne County at www.wayneartscenter.org/bigread.html.

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THE
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READ



The Ohio Arts Council helped fund this program or organization with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans.