

Anne-Marie Oomen: Inspiring the Next Generation of Playwrights

By: Kacie Blanchette and Nyah Parker

May 15, 2025

TRAVERSE CITY - When Anne-Marie Oomen shared her playwriting wisdom, laptops snapped open and pens flew across notebooks—because, in that instant, the ten-minute plays the Writers Studio class had been wrestling with finally clicked into focus.

Anne-Marie Oomen is an award-winning West Michigan-born writer. She's the founding editor of *Dunes Review*, an independent Northern Michigan literary journal that you can read online. She also serves as a board member and former president of Michigan Writers, a local organization dedicated to educating and supporting writers at every stage of their journey.

She has close connections with Northwest Ed Career Tech as well as the Interlochen College of Creative Arts. She's a talented, multi-faceted writer who can create anything from plays, to memoirs, to poems.

Some of her major works include books like *Love, Sex, and 4-H* and *As Long as I Know You: The Mom Book*, her book co-authored with Linda Nemec Foster, *The Lake Michigan Mermaid*, and award-winning play *Northern Belles*. She has received many awards, including, but not limited to, the Michigan Author Award for Lifetime Achievement (2023-2024), Association of Writers and Writing Programs's Sue William Silverman Nonfiction Award, and multiple Michigan Notable Book Awards.

In an interview with Oomen, she stated that “The reward of all these books is connecting with readers. The awards are lovely, but the most important thing is making a connection.” Oomen is deeply involved with her local community and emphasized the importance of connecting with the people and places around you. She participates in a unique event, the Water Warriors of Empire, where people from the community take three-minute dips in a lake during winter, helping to raise awareness about Michigan’s water. This practice encourages people to interact with the environment and advocate for the protection and preservation of local natural resources.

On November 22, 2024, Anne-Marie Oomen joined the Writers Studio class via video call for a playwriting workshop, just as students were polishing their ten-minute scripts. She stressed that action is key—every scene needs movement, and the plot must stay front and center. Oomen contrasted the sweeping length of classical drama with the brisk pace of modern works, and she reminded the young writers that every character must be driven by both desire and fear.

The class agreed that Oomen’s advice was not only extremely useful, but also gave them fresh confidence as they submitted their plays to the Page 2 Stage Contest, formerly known as the Young Playwrights Festival.

Oomen’s visit left the class with new ideas and sharper scripts. Her straightforward tips on action and tension gave students the push they needed to refine their plays and submit with confidence. By exploring her published work and keeping an eye on local workshops or readings, young writers can keep that momentum going and continue learning from her clear, practical approach to storytelling.